



# **HERITAGE OF THE TAMILS TEMPLE ARTS**

*Editors*

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## INTRODUCTION

The ancient race of the Tamils has been gifted with a grandiose tradition denoting a long and glorious past. As a principle the International Institute of Tamil Studies has undertaken the task of exploring the Tamils' heritage in all the spheres. In this respect the I.I.T.S. has conducted the following seminars, viz.,

1. Cultural Heritage of the Tamils(1978)
2. Literary Heritage of the Tamils(1978)
3. Language and Grammatical Heritage of the Tamils (1979)
4. Art & Architectural Heritage of the Tamils(1980)
5. Historical Heritage of the Tamils(1981)
6. Philosophical Heritage of the Tamils(1983)
7. Siddha Medicine Heritage of the Tamils(1984)

In accordance with the foresaid series, this year, this Institute conducts the Seminar on "Heritage of the Tamils-Temple Arts".

After the last Seminar on Siddha Medicine Heritage of the Tamils, the work for the present Seminar was started. We have planned to bring out a big volume in English and a good number of books in Tamil. Accordingly, now the English Volume is released. The Tamil books will follow soon.

A number of Temples are found all over Tamil Nadu and hence Tamil Nadu can truly be said to be a Land of Temples. Also, the Tamil Proverb "Koil illa Ūril Kuṭiyirukka Vāṇṭām" ("One should not live in a place without a Temple") reveals the fact that there are Temples in all the nooks and corners in Tamilnadu.

This Institute had asked different scholars to present research papers on big as well as small Temples which are spread throughout Tamil Nadu. As such seventy different topics were selected and sent to more than sixty scholars for their contribution of articles. Among them more than forty scholars accepted the request. But only twenty six scholars had sent their articles in time for publication. One among them contributed two articles which we gladly accepted.

Humankind, by nature of its evolution, is a Historical Species. In that respect, the Temple has a multifariously edifying and uniquely important role to play in the past 1500 years, history of the Tamil people. One cannot write a relevant History of the Tamils without the aid of the study of Temples. Moreover, the Temples of Tamilnadu can be said to be veritable Books in Granite of Historical Knowledge.

The I.I.T.S expresses its gratitude to all the scholars who came forward to contribute their articles regarding Temple Arts and their heritage.

We express our heart-felt thanks to the Chairman of the Institute, the Hon'ble Minister for Education of Tamilnadu **Thiru. C. Aranganayagam**, who gladly co-operates in and renders all aid in his governing capacity to all the activities undertaken by this Institute.

Also, it would be amiss if we were not to express our indebtedness to **Dr Avvai Natarajan**, Secretary to the Govt of Tamil Nadu - Department of Tamil Development & Culture, whose able guidance and encouragement are always available to us here at the Institute, in several of its activities. The index was prepared by Miss. Lalitha.

And lastly, we express our thankfulness to the workers and **Mr. Ramane of Blaze Printers & Co**, Adyar, Madras-20, who have neatly executed the printing of this volume in time.

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# **Temple Arts in Tamilnadu**

**A. K. Vijayabhanu**

I feel greatly honoured in associating myself with this Seminar. But the role that has been allotted to me should have in all fairness been given to some versatile scholar on the subject. And not to one who, despite his devotion to Tamil Art and Culture, and even a sort of emotional attachment to it, cannot claim to possess more than a scrappy knowledge of its essentials.

The International Institute of Tamil Studies, an estimable body in every sense, commanding the veneration of all Tamil-lovers, is already building up high standards of scholarship and learning. Its intellectual output, already immense, is growing in appreciable measures year after year. It is gratifying to think that the Institute has already in its service highly accomplished scholars, and their dedicated work is yielding wonderfully rich dividends as could be seen from the long list of varied Publications the Institute has to its credit. The great savants, who have pooled their energies in this Campus to make the Institute more serviceable in the cause it has espoused are in fact making, in their silence and solitude, another great epoch in the history of Tamil Culture.

For a linguistic culture like ours, of dateless origin, with its priceless treasures of Poetry and Art, has an evolutionary life, an inner dynamism, which, after every temporary spell of stagnation, experiences a marvellous renaissance. It has a spark of life that could never be extinguished. In my view we are in the middle of one such renaissance for the past two or three decades. And particularly during the present one, it is getting into larger focus, and its fermenting libido more in evidence. Fortunate we are to live at this golden moment. And I consider myself especially fortunate to have the privilege of your learned company though it might be just for passing hour or two.

Before I venture on a few ideas on Temple Arts, the subject of today's Seminar, may I tell you that this place itself I hail as a temple though in a figurative sense, and the very spot where I stand as one of the most blessed and hallowed.

When we talk of Temple Arts, we cannot forget that in Tamil land Arts like Sculpture, Painting, Music and Dance, have grown with the temples either as part of temple architecture or as part of temple ritual or both. Quite early in their history, the Tamils had realised that Art could be used as the best form of spiritual expression and that true Art was fundamentally spiritual. Even when its proximate object was the gratification of the senses, its ultimate function was the sublimation of Man's physical urges and linking them to his spiritual growth. If temples were meant for the cultivation of the spirit of Man and so reinforcing it as to make it triumph over his flesh, then the Arts were meant to effectively subserve this end. That was how the Arts in Tamil land came to have a predominantly spiritual content and a religious orientation. That was how they became, generally and mostly, inseparable from temples. That was how our temples became the repositories of Art as well as its cradle.

If we study the history of Art as found in our temples, we find a progressive growth in its content, quality and excellence from age to age, and each age representing a new phase in its spiritual advancement and mental evolution. We notice at times considerable stagnation too if not steep down-sliding, and the cause had been either a war or a famine, or some internal disorder and the consequent disrupting of settled life. These are not the conditions congenial for the growth of Art. The creative faculty gets immobilised. But architecture had not suffered much even in times like these. Architecture being a technic art, its forms may be handed down traditionally and its principles practiced almost mechanically. The higher phonetic arts, however, of sculpture and painting admit of no such mechanical treatment. They need an individual polarisation and intensity, a higher form of emotive and intellectual expression for which environmental peace and peace at heart are essential.

# **Temple Arts in Tamilnadu**

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South India is studded with gigantic temples, fascinating in their beauty and imposing in their appearance. Grants inscribed on copper plates proclaim a degree of aesthetic and artistic attainment that could well qualify the Chola period to be the classical age of South Indian art. Chola Kings have left an indelible mark in the history of India. Most of the gopurams of the temples in South India, particularly in Tamil Nadu, are themselves finely executed works of art. They are enclosed within tall granite walls having big majestic towers. Most of the idols in the temples are made of black granite out of a single stone.

### **Rock-cut Temples :**

The rock-cut temples in Tamil Nadu speak of the glory and greatness of the illustrious ruler, Mahendravarman. They are a unique achievement of Dravidian culture. Fergusson, the famous authority of Indian and Eastern Art confines the term 'Dravidian' principally to Tamils, and includes the people speaking cognate tongues like Telugu, Canarese and Malayalam. But for all practical purposes, we can take the word 'Dravidian' to be synonymous with 'Tamil'.

Stone architecture in the Tamil land began with the Pallavas. From the cave temples of Tiruchirapalli to the rathas of Mamallapuram and subsequently to structural temples like the Kailasanatha temple at Conjeevaram and the shore temple at Mamallapuram-this is line of evolution of Pallava Art. While the nature of architecture in the Pre-Pallava period was brick and timber structures, rock-cut and structural copies in stone were predominant during the Pallava period. The Pallavas resorted to the 'Sankirna' mode of construction, employing several materials together, such as stone, brick with lime-mortar and wood.

The pattern of architecture during the period of Pandyas was by way of adding massive compound walls to the temples, creating prakaras, constructing sky-high gopurams, etc. The early idiom of the Pandyan structural temples is an all-stone temple simple in plan, complete with vimana, ardha-mandapa. Earliest surviving examples are found today at Kaliyapati, Kodumbalur, Eradi, Tiruppur, Panankudi, Viralur in Tiruchi District etc.

The Pandyan sculptural art was restricted to the figures in the several tiers of the vimana which in many cases were of stone. Portrait sculptures have been carved from the days of the Pallavas, and during the Chola period they occupied important places in the temple structures.

There is evidence of transfer of skill from wood work to stone work, and the indigenous origin of Pallava art is clear from the development of the primitive hut into the temple. The history of Dravidian art is divided into five epochs :<sup>1</sup> 'The Pallava Period (600-850)' that of sculptured rocks (cave temples appearing only in this period);<sup>2</sup> 'The Early Chola Period (850-1100)' that of grand vimanas (the sanctuary of the temple);<sup>3</sup> 'The Later Chola Period (1100-1350)' that of the most beautiful gopurams (gateways);<sup>4</sup> 'The Vijayanagar Period (1350-1600)' that of mandapams;<sup>5</sup> and 'The Modern Period (after 1600)' that of corridors. The forms of architecture changed slowly and the development is primarily one of ornamentation so much so the history of Dravidian architecture reduces itself to the history of ornamentation. There is not much structural development, the methods of construction are very elementary though the sculptural part of the work is exceedingly interesting, say, in heaping stone upon stone.

### **Architecture :**

The beautiful main gateway of the Suchindram Temple is a piece of architecture that has attained to a high standard. The gopuram is an immense structure of 134 feet high. The Champakaraman Mandapam in front of the sanctum sanctorum has 32 pillars depicting exquisite carvings below the ceiling.

The architecture of the Madurai Meenakshiamman Temple is said to be purely Dravidian-its characteristics being the pyramidal towers of colossal height dominating the surrounding landscape for miles around. The Kilikootu Mandapa is supported by pillars cut from a single block of granite and both in point of stability and in point of architecture and realistic richness of detail, the pillars as a whole are unsurpassed.

The Tirumalai Naick's Palace in Madurai has been declared to be the largest and most attractive specimen of palace architec-

style of the Pallavas was at its peak in its decorative beauty and intrinsic quality.

We find the structural style of Dravidian art in its peak form in the Shore Temple at Mamallapuram, the Kailasanatha Temple at Kanchi, the Rajarajesvaram Temple at Thajavur and in Gangaikondacholapuram Temple. The Chola queens and Princesses had themselves played a very notable part in bringing temple art to a stage of unrivalled excellence.

### **Sculpture :**

Suchindram in Kanyakumari District may well be considered as one of the store-houses of the richest specimens of art and sculpture in stone. In the pillars, there are innumerable carvings of gods and goddesses, works of very superior quality.

In the Meenakshiamman Temple at Madurai the delicate sculpture is worked in ponderous material and long galleries are interspersed with sculptured pillars. Gopurams or towers begin with door posts of 60 feet height cut out of a single stone. Over that, in tapering layers are carved rows of Gods and Goddesses, animals of various kinds and mythical figures illustrating Puranic legends of yore. There are innumerable carvings on different pillars in the Mandapa in front of Lord Sundareswara Sannadhi and the soaring artistic conception is shown in the brilliant carvings of Siva and Parvati, Ardhanariswara, Harihara, Gajaharamurthi, the wedding of Meenakshi and Sundareswara etc. The artistic featuring of Siva in the form of Dakshinamurthi in meditation is unspeakably super and this is a piece of sculpture illustrating to what heights of beauty Tamil Art can rise. The sculptures of Saivite Saints known as Nayanmars are remarkable for the devout, spiritual expression on their faces and the carefully executed detail. The greatest triumph of technical skill in stone-cutting is to be found within the temple walls.

The sculptural work in Avadayar Koil in Pudukkottai District is literally matchless and stands apart. At any rate, they are among the few sculptural works of unbeatable excellence in Tamil Nadu.

ture and we have a remarkable combination of Hindu, Moham-  
medan and Gothic styles.

The gopuram of the temple in Tiruvananai in Ramnad District is a specimen of Dravidian art presented in the upper storeys.

In the Brihadiswara temple in Thanjavur, we find wonderful architecture in the pyramidal structure of vimana of 14 storeys rising to a height of 216 feet.

The Avadayar Koil is the best architectural marvel of Tamil Nadu. Another marvel in the construction of this temple is that the rays of the setting sun always fall on the sanctum sanctorum.

The Kumbeshwarar temple in Kumbakonam has wonderful pieces of architecture. In fact, Kumbakonam and the surrounding places have plenty of temples with fine architecture, and sculptures of matchless workmanship.

In Vaitheeswaran Koil, Thanjavur District, old Pallava architecture is abundantly in evidence.

The temples of Conjeevaram are furnished with lofty towers, beautiful halls and mandapams. The 180 feet tower of Sri Ekambaranatha temple and the beautiful hundred-pillared mandapam with its exquisite workmanship in Sri Varadarajaswami temple are the best specimens.

The various artistic creations abounding in Mamallapuram, belonging to the Pallava period of nearly 1200 years ago, stand out to proclaim to the visitor the dignity and splendour of the art and architecture of South India. We have the largest number of the earliest monuments of the South in Mamallapuram.

It was Mahendravarman who first introduced in the South the cave style of temple architecture. The most noteworthy cave temples in Mamallapuram are of Trimurthi, Varaha, Durga and Pancha Pandava. The greater parts of these temples are rock excavations after the fashion of Ellora and Elephanta, superior in taste and symmetry. Another piece of architectural beauty deserving study and close observation in this place is the Shore Temple. It belongs to a period when the constructional



There is a beautiful hundred-pillared Mandapam on the Rock-Temple in Tiruchi. This cave temple has been cut out of a rock that stands out like a small hillock. It contains many sculptures of note.

In Tiruvanaikkaval Temple, there are many sculptures of rare and exquisite beauty of workmanship and there are many mandapams in the temple, hundred-pillared mandapam, thousand-pillared mandapam, vasanta mandapam, somaskanda mandapam, Nataraja mandapam, Trimurthi mandapam etc. The inner portion of the thousand-pillared mandapam looks like a chariot and many wheels, horses and beautiful images have been carved out on pillars.

Out of the 1000 pillars of the Mandapam at Srirangam, only 936 pillars are available now and the images carved out on these pillars attract our attention and reveal the remarkable talent of the sculptors of those days.

Learned critics of art and sculpture say that the figure of Siva in the Brahmadheeswara Temple is the best of its kind in the South. Nandi, the great Bull is made of one stone, and this Nandi is considered to be the second biggest in the whole of India.

The massive structure of the Thanjavur temple is decorated with elaborate sculptures, images of the Hindu Pantheon and decorative mouldings. The workmanship of the shrine and tower of Lord Subrahmanya is considered to be a perfect gem of carved stone work, the tooling of the stone in the most elaborate patterns remaining as clear and sharp as on the day it left the sculpture's hands. The great Art-historian Fergusson says: 'Chola artists conceived like giants and finished like jewellers.' The outer structures of the Big temple are decorated with fine and minute sculptures which proclaim the immense labour and precision that have gone into their production.

Dharasuram in Thanjavur District has a Temple, the inside walls of which and the outer prakaram contain stone carvings of different poses and styles of gymnastic feats, as we see in the modern circus, by both men and women. The two Dwarapalaka

at the very entrance of the temple are imposing figures giving vivid anatomical expressions of the exuberance of youth.

In Dharasuram - we also see very skilful and artistic works of superb style, giving a glimpse into the social conditions of the past. The stone image of Ravana carrying Kailas is an extraordinarily fine specimen of workmanship.

The Kumbeshwarar temple in Kumbakonam has a gopuram containing many figures of rare and exquisite beauty. This temple contains some wonderful pieces of sculpture and on a single block of stone in the Navaratri Mandapam all the 27 stars and 12 rasis have been carved out.

In the Sri Rajagopalaswami temple in Mannargudi, the image of the idol of Lord Krishna, known as Santana Rajagopalan, is made of bronze and the workmanship is super-excellent.

The conception of the idol of Nataraja, which has been claimed in the civilised world as the greatest work of Oriental art, is not merely a stroke of the imagination of an artist, but is a monument of the inner vision of the artist devotee.

In the figure of Nataraja, both Mover and the Moved are depicted in life-like shape. This is the climax of revelation in the temple and science is personified in art. The great interpreter of Oriental art, Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, describes the form of Nataraja as the synthesis of Religion, Science and Art.

In Mamallapuram, there are some monolithic sculptures of animals which have their own charm and elegance. There is an open-air sculpture known as Arjuna's penance. A great rock wall, with a fissure in its middle, is ornamented on both sides with sculptured figures of deities, human beings, nagas and a variety of animals all together numbering about 1000 and each figure is a study in itself.

There are some sculptures of animals of which giant elephants are the most impressive and are considered to be the noblest creations of the human mind. A monkey family has also been depicted in a very exquisite and appealing

manner. In the liveliness of each figure, we can notice the intense and naive love of life that characterises the Buddhist art at Sanchi.

### **Painting :**

In the Meenakshi Amman Temple, there are innumerable paintings on the walls of the Maha Mandapa.

In the Brahadeeswara temple, in the corridor which borders the walls separating the sanctum sanctorum, there are Chola fresco paintings which have been discovered recently. The entire wall is full of paintings of different periods of the Cholas and Pandyas.

In the Vedaranyam temple, there are a number of paintings which are worth seeing. The most important of them are those of the 63 Nayanmars, Nataraja dancing, Kalasamharamurthi, Veerabhadraswami, Mahavishnu etc.

### **Music :**

The fact that music was part and parcel of life in those days has found expression in the construction of temples in Tamil Nadu.

In the Suchindram temple, in the northern corridor, there are four musical pillars cut out of a single block of granite stone, in the fashion of slender cylindrical rods, producing different musical sounds when tapped. We see musical pillars in Madurai Meenakshi Temple and also in Nellaiyappar Temple at Tirunelveli.

In Dharasuram, the steps to the small mandapa in front of the temple are made of stones, which give different musical sound when tapped and all the seven swaras can be had at different points.

In the Thyagaraja temple in Tiruvarur, there is a peculiar musical instrument called Panchamuka Vadhya and this has got five faces and is ornamented with the snake, the swastika and the lotus on three. The fourth face is plain without decorations. The central face shows the face of a deer. It is said that the Nandi played on this when Siva danced. The circumference of the instrument is fifty-six inches.

Great composers have composed hymns in praise of the Lords in the temples. For example, the Nayanmars have praised the Lord Ekambaranatha in their Tevarams. The great Tamil work Kanda Puranam and Kanchi Puranam were composed in Conjeevaram. The hymns of the Azhwars have been sung in praise of the Lord Varadarajaswami. Thyagaraja also has sung about Lord Varadaraja and Goddess Kamakshi Devi. Alwar Pasurams and Nayanmar's Thevaram and Tiruvachakam are set to music and sung with the accompaniment of instruments in many Siva and Vaishnava temples even today as a part of daily temple routine.

### **Dance :**

The doors at the entrance to the shrine of Meenakshi in Madurai have some of the most important dancing poses described in Natyasastra. It may be observed that these poses, along with those represented on the niches of the Jayandeswar temple, those on the doorways leading to the Mukkuruni Pillayar and to the eastern tower and again those on the stone pillars under the southern tower, exhaust almost all the types of classical Hindu dancing. The Madurai temple is thus almost an encyclopaedia of the dancing poses depicted both in stone and wood. We see almost all the dancing poses in the high wooden doors at the gate of Nataraja Temple at Chidambaram.

In Dharasuram temple, all the dancing poses of Bharathanatyam are carved on stone.

That I think is enough to illustrate what we have achieved in the field of Temple Arts and Architecture. Tamils have been known at one time as the greatest temple builders of the world. Not only they have built temples, they have also built their own system of moralistic attitudes to life. Not only have they been great lovers of Art, they have also sought to make life itself into an Art, a thing of beauty. They have participated in the joys of life not only with their flesh but also with their spirit. They have an ethos of their own and a linguistic and cultural identity. It had been an intractable identity, and no power had been able to make inroads into it.

But it does not mean it should be an insular, unaccommodative identity, resisting all healthy influences. The ultimate

function of any civilisation or culture is to humanise the individual man and scrape out the animal side of his nature. Any civilisation or culture that falls short of this purpose just becomes vacuous and perishes in time. This is the task that any civilisation, any culture, must set for itself. And we are living in times when there are many national cultures and civilisations competing for this task. Side by side, there is a cultural fraternity emerging inside the country and also a world-culture in formation. The world is shrinking and geographical boundaries have just become imaginary lines. We are subject to healthy, vitalising currents from all over the world. Every thinking man has the inescapable feeling that he does not belong to a particular territory, but to the world as a whole. The heritage of the world is his own personal heritage. Several decades ago, H. G. Wells, a highly acclaimed master-mind, proposed the idea of a federal world state. Rabin-dranath Tagore dreamt and longed for a "World that has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls". In the field of civilisation and culture, willy-nilly, we have become subject to a variety of gravitational forces, world-wide and very decisive. Man is beginning to feel that he is not just a uni-verse but a multi-verse.

In this context, what should the Tamils do? They must become as much aware of the present as of the past.

"Civilisation is an active live deposit that is formed by the combustion of the Present with the Past. Neither in countries without a Present nor in those without a Past is it to be discovered".

This observation of Cyril Connolly in his critical study on civilisations entitled "The unquiet Grave" has a far greater meaning than what is apparent. It is a call to every thinking mind to cultivate an intense awareness of the Present. No culture or civilisation can build barriers around it and enclose itself. Much less one like ours with an illustrious and hoary past. No culture can ever be compartmentalised or contained in air-proof capsules. Cultures have to interact and prove their virility and staying power, their subliminal capacity to survive. So too our Tamil culture must interact with others and leave its stamp on them, receiving at the same time whatever healthy

nourishment they could give. We must enrich our culture more and more and launch it into the national and world current. We should not go out of joint with the world and miss the enormously beneficent influences that knock at our doors from every quarter of the globe. Being Tamils, we have to think ourselves as Indians too and citizens of the world as well. This triple orientation to our thinking is the prime need of the hour.

It would be appropriate to remind oneself at this moment the highly significant observation of Toynbee, the famous historian whose ten-volume study of World Civilisations is verily a philosophical treatise, a monumental work that is bound to endure for centuries. According to him, many noble civilisations and cultures have built their own grave because they became conditioned to the Past and woodenly impervious to the fertilising and life-giving influences of the Present, when the world around them offered cultural treasures, they were lost in insensitive slumber and forgot to avail.

“Civilisation is a movement, not a condition.  
It is a Voyage, not a harbour”

This laconic statement of his contains a lofty lesson for people like us who have much to contribute to the world and much to receive in return. Those who have eyes to see will see.

What should we do then? The answer is not far afield. The most beloved national Poet of our land, with Tamil blood raging all through his veins, in a sense a true embodiment of the Tamil mystique, had already given us the call. He wants us to go to every corner of the world and bring to our home and hearth all the available cultural and artistic treasures. He expected a genetic reaction and consequent enrichment of a high order.

Even as our forefathers have left us an enormously rich heritage, an inestimable and multi-faceted one, we are beholden to leave to our progeny an equally remarkable heritage. How to evolve it and on what fashion? That is the paramount question. The International Institute of Tamil Studies can

ponder over it. Every scholar connected with its labours can do his part. If we honestly believe that Tamil is the elixir of our cultural and spiritual life, then it is our duty to see that in quality and quantity it never abates. We should not also forget that all mankind has a right to its blessing. It is in the power of some of us to carry this blessing to the world far and wide. Some of us can do much. And some of us, beset as we are with many limitations, can't do much. But still we could do what little we can. And even the smallest act that is done to promote this lofty objective will not go in vain. It will yield its result in due time.

“How far that little candle throws its beams  
So shines a good deed in a naughty world”.

(Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice)







# **The Temples of the Madurai District**

**Dr. A. V. Jeyechandrun**

Madurai is a name to be recognised with. The city of Madurai is the cultural capital of Tamil Nadu. The study of the Madurai Region area around the present city is interesting because of "its geological stability, morphological complexity, anthropological diversity, socio-economic variety, cultural antiquity and historic continuity".<sup>1</sup> But this paper concerns itself with the continuity of certain cultural traditions that is perceived in the Madurai region and more particularly in the Madurai District. These relate to architectural and iconographic traditions of this area.

## **The early period :**

Madurai was ruled by the Pandyas, till the medieval period except for a segment of time when it came under the Cola-Pandyas- Cola princes ruling this area as Viceroys. In the beginnings of the historical period the region was ruled by illustrious Pandyas referred to in the classical Literature of the Tamils, dated from 3rd century B.C. to 3rd century A.D. These works speak of Pandyan Arivuṭai Nampi<sup>2</sup>, Pandyan Iḷavantikaippaḷḷittuñciya Naṁmāraṇ<sup>3</sup>, Pandyan Karunkai oḷ vāṭ perum peyar vaḷuti<sup>4</sup>, Pandyan Kaṇappēr taṇṭa ukkiraperu vaḷuti<sup>5</sup>, Pandyan Kīrancāttan<sup>6</sup>, Pandyan Kūṭākāratut tuñciya māraṇ vaḷuti<sup>7</sup>, Pandyan Cittrara māṭattut tuñciya Nāṁmāraṇ<sup>8</sup>, Pandyan Talaiyālāṅkāṇattu ceru veṇṇa Neṭunceḷiyaṇ<sup>9</sup>, Pandyan Neṭunceḷiyaṇ<sup>10</sup>, Pandyan Palyāka cālai mutukuṭimip peru vaḷuti<sup>11</sup>, and Pandyan Veḷḷiyampalattut tuñciya peru vaḷuti<sup>12</sup>. Two Brahmi inscriptions discovered at Māṅguḷam in the Madurai area mention the name of Neṭunceḷiyaṇ. It is not our intention to discuss at length the dates of these Pandyas, but only to stress that the area was known to have been a cultural centre, patronising illustrious poets and maintaining the ethos of the Tamil country. 56 poets lived in the Madurai region, if we are to be guided by the colophones which provided prefix to their names, the term 'Maturai'. Pandyas are referred to by Vālmīki in his Ramāyaṇa, Vyāsa in Mahabharata and by Katyāyana (4th century B.C.) and Megasthenes (3rd century B.C.).

## **The medieval Pandyas :**

However it is from Pandya Kaṭunkōṇ (570 A.D.) that clear cut chronology of the Pandyas could be drawn up. From Kaṭunkōṇ to Māravarmaṇ Rājasimha II (900-920 A. D.) the Madurai region Was under the rule of the first Pandyan Empire. The most illustrious of the Pandyas in this period who contributed to the cultural ethos of the Tamils in this region were Arikēcari Māravarmaṇ, the contemporary of Tirugnānacampantar and Tirunāvukkaracar, the two Tevaram hymnists and Kōcceṭaiyan Raṇatīran (647-720) the contemporary of the third Tevaram hymnists Suntarar, Varaguna II, (862-885), who led a saintly life during the end of his life was a contemporary of Manivasakar. Vīra Nārayana (860-905) and Maravarma Rājasimha (905-20) were illustrious rulers who constructed temples and created endowments in several other existing temples about which we shall see presently.

Vira Pandya (946-966) was defeated and killed by Cola Aditya II (956-969) and the Pandya territory came under the cola Pandyas. It was Saṭaiyavarman Kulasēkharan (1190-1218) who restored the glory of the Pandyas and till the rule of Māravarman Kulasēkhara (1268-1310) the Pandyas ruled over the Madurai region, except for a short interlude of 48 years from 1323 to 1371, when the Madurai town and a small area around it was ruled by Madurai Sultanate. After redemption of Madurai from the Muslims, the area was ruled by Nayaks who were Viceroys of the Vijayanagar Empire. Sundaratol Vānātīrāyan, the Bana ruler held sway over the territory from 1452-1496. Then again the Nayaks were ruling the area as vassals of the Vijayanagar Empire when in 1533 Viṣwanatha Nayakkar crowned himself as the founder of the Nayakkar dynasty which held the Madurai area till 1739 when Mīṇākshī the last of the Madurai Nayakkar ruler was defeated. The administration of the Madurai area, by and large, after a turmoil war taken over by the East India Company in 1801.<sup>13</sup>

## **Development of Architecture :**

As the development of Art and Architecture largely depended on the regal patronage, this short survey of the political History will help in assessing the evolution the twin

Arts, Architecture and Iconography in this region. Indian Art was theocentric in conception till the beginnings of this century and Pandyan Art in keeping with this trend, grew influenced by the religious ethos of this soil.

The absence of stone monuments or sculptures, in Tamil Nadu, belonging to the Sangam period is most surprising. The reason for such an absence is not far to seek. The persistent Tamil tradition of associating stone with the dead, acted as a deterrent factor in the use of this material for building or for sculpturing. The choice was wood, Terracottas were also, for some reason or other not preferred.

To discuss the development of Art and Architecture of the Pandyas it becomes necessary to consider a wider area other than the Madurai District. Pandyas had ruled continuously entire South from the beginnings of the Sangam period till the 16th century. Except for a short segment of time during the Kalabra Interrugnum, their rule was continuous. Almost contemporaneous with the Pallavas, early attempts were made by the Pandyas in carving out cave temples. But the problem in examining these early structures are three fold. The first is the geographical seclusion of the area; second, the Pandyan History bristles with uncertainties and the third, the monuments unlike the Pallavas, were distributed in a very wide area. The cave temples of the Pallavas were found in a small contiguous region in Chingleput, South Arcot, North Arcot, and in Tiruchirappalli Districts. They were few and in Mamallapuram we find most of these cave temples, monoliths, and structurals huddled together. The case of the Pandyas is little different. The caves are distributed in the Districts of Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari Districts, removed from each other by long distances. The area is not also contiguous.

In this paper the natural caverns found around Madurai which were occupied by the Jain Ascetics and where Brahmi inscriptions dated to 3rd century B.C. are found, are not discussed for obvious reasons, that they are not temples.<sup>14</sup>

Like the Pallavas, the Pandyas created a number of cave

temples. These cave temples were unique in two ways-1) They did not, like the Pallavas, use sand stone; but instead used hard granite which was a superior medium and also difficult to carve. 2) These cave temples were unique in another sense that sculptures were also carved in them. Rock-cut Linga, which came to be termed as **svayambhu Linga** were cut in the temple sanctum. For this discussion on Pandyan Architecture in its early phases, an area extending beyond the Madurai District has to be considered.

The earlier of these cave temples was the one at Pillayārpaṭṭi in Ramanathapuram District where Ganesa and Harihara were found in life size bas-relief in addition to a cella for a rock cut Siva Liṅga. The cave is dated to the close of the 5th century based on an early archaic inscription<sup>15</sup> in proto-vaṭṭeḷutu character found in the cave. There is a later dating for this cave provided by some scholars. Incidentally Ganesa is carved in several Pandya caves as in Tirupparamkunṇam, Kuṇṇarakuṭi, Sevelpaṭṭi Tirumalāpuram Kuṇṇattur and on the flank of the facade in the cave temples in Vallam, Kuḍiyāmalai, Dēvarmalai, Tirukkaḷākkuḍi etc.<sup>16</sup> The presence of Ganesa in all the pandyan caves is interesting for we do not discover him in the edifices of the contemporaneous Pallava cave temples except in Tiruchirapalli lower cave temple and Siva cave temple at Tiruvellarai and as a deity at the end of the Saptamāṭṛika series in one of the structural temples at Kāñcipuram-Mātaṅgēsvara and at Tiruttaṇi-Vīraṭṭānēsvara.

Another earlier cave of the Pandyas, datable from the foundation inscription of Sēndan (654-670 A.D.) is at Malaiyaṭikkuricci, outside the Madurai District. The date of the inscription is 671 AD and the cave is in Sankaran koyil Taluk, Tirunelveli District. This cave was excavated by Sāttan Eran during the 17th regnal year of Pandya king Sendan Maran.<sup>17</sup> The inscription in the cave mentions the word Kaṇṇirukkōyil-meaning stone temple. Similarly the Inscription at the cave temple of Narasimha at Ānamalai in Madurai District dated to 770 A.D. refers to the temple as SILĀGRAHAM and KAṚṬALI, i.e. stone sanctum. In Pandya territory the Cave temples were referred to as KAṚṬALIS. By the side of the Narasimha Cave, is the Cave for Muruka locally known as Lādan Koyil (Kandan koyil).<sup>18</sup> These two cave temples at Anamalai came up during the time of Neṭuṇcaṭaiyaṇ Parāntakan, the donar

of the Velvikudi grant. He was responsible for constructing many temples. Sīvaramangala copper plates describe him as a “parama Vaishṇava”. He ruled the land for 25 years from 765-790 A.D. The Narasimha Cave temple was carved by Marankāṛi, the Chief Minister for Neṭuncaṭaiyan and before its completion he passed away. The temple was completed by his brother Māraṇ Eyinaṇ who also performed the kumbabhisheka.

The Tiruparamkuṇṇam Northern Cave temple was the work of cāttan Gaṇapati, as known from the vaṭṭeḷuttu inscription of the 6th regnal year of Neṭuncaṭaiyan. Cāttan Gaṇapati’s wife Nakkaṇ Korri was responsible for the creation of the temple for Durga and Ceṭṭai (Jyeshthā).

Considering the Architecture of these early Pandyan caves and comparing them with the Pallavas one finds many special features in these early caves making us often wonder whether the Pandyan models were earlier to the Pallavas.<sup>19</sup> As already stated the medium of the cave temple of the Pandyas was granite, very hard medium indeed and requiring greater skills of cutting. KŪDŪS on the projecting cornice and the facade embellishments were totally absent. The two Dvārapālas are different, while one has a club and rests on it, the other is without it. Often the clubless Dvarapala has his hand folded on his chest.

The Tiruparamkuṇṇam Cave temple now associated with Subrahmaṇya is not an isolated one. The entire boulder on the Northern side has been utilised to create eight caves. The main cave consists of three sanctums, the centre dedicated to Durga facing North. On the extreme end on the West of the Cave is the Śiva temple facing East with the installed Linga. This is surprising for in all the Pandya caves, the Linga is rock cut. The Śiva temple has another feature, viz., behind the Linga is the Somaskanda panel. The installation of the Liṅga perhaps is a later work since the VARI MĀRGA has been cut out and led outside making a hole in an already existing bas-relief on the KOSHṬHA. To the East of this main cave is the temple for Viṣṇu. The Viṣṇu is chiselled in the rock. These three temple sanctums had the figures of Gods and Goddesses carved out in the rock itself. The Durga in the sanctum

is standing and a devotee is offering his head. This is known as Navakaṇṭam offering. Similar sculptures are seen at Mamallapuram in Varāha Cave, Ādhivarāha Cave and Draupadi Ratha, Pallava rock-cut Cave temple in Śiṅgavaram, lower rock cut temple in Tiruchirāpaḷḷi, Punjai (Nanipaḷḷi) and Puḷḷamangai, both in Thanjavur District and in the Anantasāyi Cave temple at Tiruttaṅgāl,<sup>20</sup> Ramanathapuram District. Another interesting feature in the Durga panel is the presence of MRGA—a stag. Attributing a stag (Kalaiyatūrti) to Durga is a Tamil Tradition and this is referred to in the Tevaram hymns.<sup>21</sup>

The caves for Jyeshtha, Lakshmi and Saptamatrika are now hidden under super structures and to enter it, one has to obtain permission of the temple authorities. In the Jyeshtha Cave, the deity is carved with Vṛṣhānan, her son and Jamuna, her daughter seated on either side of her. The Lakshmi Cave is below the main Cave and has a seated Lakshmi. By its side is the Cave for Saptamātrika. Both these caves serve now as a store for keeping temple jewellery. The two caves for Andarābharanar and Ugramūrthi are either side of the main steps leading to the main cave.

One more of the series of eight Caves in that hill side on the North of Tiruparamkunṇam, is the cave presently known as "Annapūrṇa Cave". Actually it is the cave for Bhuvaneswari who is seated in the centre with 21 attendant deities around her. In her four hands she holds the characteristic implements and mudras AṅKUSA, PĀSA and ĀBHAYA and VARADA MUDRAS. She is seated on padma and the rear of the seat is decorated with makara and simha.

The last of the Eight Caves, closed to the public view and serving as a store room, is the Brahma Cave. Much of the Cave portion has been built up and what one sees is the four faced Brahma through whose head ABHISHĒKA water is led into and which comes out through his mouth. Near him is Muruka on a chariot and a peacock below it.

Two other important cave temples in the Madurai Region of the Early Pandya period are at Kunṇattur. One of these depict a shrine cell, a GARBHAGRĀHA with rock-cut Liṅga in

the sanctum and a Nandi in front. The door-jamb is heavily ornamented and reveals Chalukyan touch. We do not find a similar model amidst the Pallava Cave temples. Never has a cave been cut out to simulate a shrine cell as it is done here. The Nandhi is a typical early Pandya one, differing from the Pallava Nandhi, in its form, composition and depiction. The other cave at Kunnattur is a Saptamatrika Cave. It is earlier than Thirukkalakkudi Cave temple.

Typical Pandyan Caves are spread far and wide and for a study we could take up<sup>22</sup> the caves at Kunṇakudi, Tirukkalakkudi, Piḷḷayārapaṭṭi, Mahipalanpatti, Tiruttaṅkal, Pirāṇmalai, Sēvalpatti and Tirumalai, in Ramanathapuram District; caves at Tirumalaipuram, Malaiyaḍikkuricci, Virasikhāmani, Vāḍikkottai, Kaḷugumalai in Tirunelveli District; and Devarmalai, Malayakkoyil. Tirumayam and Sittannavasal in Pudukkottai District; Tirunaṇḍikarai Cave temple in Kanyakumari District<sup>23</sup>.

The only Pandyan monolithic temple of the 'Ratha type' of the Pallavas, scooped out of a rock is at Kalugamalai in Tirunelveli temple. The temple like the Ellora temple of the Rashtrakūṭas is an achievement of the Pandyan sthāpatis deserving all our tributes. The sculptures top the talas formed an integral part of the temple edifice. It is of the Dravida temple type. The Kaḷugumalai monolith is a TRITALA Vimana with bold KAPOTA and open NĀSIKĀS. It is of the ARPITA type and in the top TALA bulls are placed. The SIKHARA is octagonal. The disposition of the sculptures in the TALA is to be noted. On the East is Umāsahita, on the South is Dakṣiṇāmurti, on the West is Nārasimha and in the North Brahmā. The placement of Nārasimha in the upper tier koṣṭha in Siva temples has been followed in the Pandya country till the 13th century with meticulous care.

While the Pallavas were lingering longer in choosing granite as a medium for their structural temples, the Pandyas unhesitatingly used this from the beginning. The Pandyan structural temples like the caves were spread out in a larger area. Inscriptions speak about a number of early structural temples around their capital, Madurai, but only a very few of early temples survive to speak of the Pandyan tradition.



The early idiom of the Pandyan structural temples is an all stone temple simple in plan, complete with VIMĀNA, ARDHA-MANḌAPA. Earliest surviving examples are found today at Kaliyapati, Kodumbalur, Eradi, Tiruppur, Panankudi and Viralur in Tiruchirapaḷḷi District. The noteworthy feature of these temples in Tiruchirapaḷḷi District is the simple style<sup>24</sup>. The dates of these surviving structurals are the late 9th century. All the temples are all-stone structurals. Except possibly Kodumbalur, these temples are EKATALA ALPA VIMĀNAS. With the exception of Tiruppur, all other temples are of the ASHṬHAPARIVĀRA type. The plan of the ADHISHṬHĀNA is simple. It has a UPĀNA, JĀGATI, TRIPAṬṬAKUMUDA, KANṬHA, PAṬṬIKA and PRATI. The Eradi temple which is the later to the other temples by half a century has an innovation in the ADHISHṬHĀNA. The arrangement changes after PAṬṬIKA and a KANṬHA, VEDI and PRATI are introduced.

The features of the BHITTI of all the temples are plain plastered with bevel corbel, BHŪTA VALABHI, open NĀSIKĀS, KŪḌUS in the KAPOTA and VYĀLAVARI above. The vimana is with square VEDI, GRĪVA and ŚIKHARA.

Almost possessing these predominant features are the Pandya temple at Tirupattur, known as Talinatha temple, The earliest inscription in the temple is that of Varaguna II (872 A.D.) mentioning the name of the God as Karṇali Bhaṭṭarar.<sup>25</sup> The original temple at Tirukoshtiyūr dedicated to Saumyanārayaṇa is a typical Pandya temple that could be dated around 775 A.D. The Only other temple that could be contemporaneous with the original design of this temple is that of Vaikunṭha Perumal temple of Nandivarman (750 A. D.) at Kāñcipuram. It is a CHATUSHTALA vimana and unlike other Pandyan models has a octoganal GRĪVA and ŚIKHARA.

There is yet another typical Pandya temple with the same ADHISHṬHĀNA, BHŪTAVALABHI, details of KAPOTA with circular NĀSIKĀ, KŪḌUS, VYALAVARI, VEDI etc. as in other temples described SUPRA in Tirunelveli District. This all—stone structural temple is DVITALA and ASHṬHĀŚRA. The Octoganal GRĪVA and ŚIKHARA perhaps gets introduced by

the beginnings of the ninth century in the Pandya country. By this time temples were constructed with the mixed medium of brick and stone. An unique example of this temple with TRITALA vimana and possessing all other Pandyan characteristics is at Koyilpatti, Tirunelveli District. The name of the temple Puvananāthasvāmi temple. There are a number of Pandya temples spread over in the Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari Districts but externally they have undergone changes due to renovations. The original matrix is seen only in the inner parts. As examples the two temples at Ukkirankoṭṭai, Cokkalingesvara temple, and Vaṭavāyilamantāl temple, Thirunelveli District may be cited.

In the Madurai District an example of a ninth century Pandya temple is at Cinnamanur. The same Pandya idiom is followed. The GRĪVA and SIKHARA are square, but later day renovations have distorted the original SIKHAMA.

The finest surviving example in Madurai District is the dilapidated temple at Kilamattur, built during the time of Vira Pandya (946—966).<sup>26</sup> It was built by Tenna van Tamiḷavēl, Nothing remains of this glorious edifice except the dvārapālās Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Bhairava, Lingodbhava and Sūrya.

Belonging to almost the same period viz., the last lap of the 9th century is the Kudal aḷagar temple at Madurai. The present structure is no doubt a reconstruction of the original shrine during the Vijayanagar period. The temple renovation was actually carried out in the year 1551 by Mahāmaṇḍalēsvara Ramaraja viṭṭala and the bricks were carried from Manamadurai in Ramanathapuram District.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless the inner dimensions of the temple remained the same. The vimana is CATUSHTALA with the rectangular first and second tiers and the third being a square. It is a SANTARA vimana and with ANARPITA hāras. The temple is mentioned in the songs of Periālvār who lived during the time of Sri Māra Sri Vallabha (815-62 A.D.). The original shrine ought to have been an all-stone structural but re-built externally with brick and stucco.

At the Madurai temple, the eleven Īsvarams in the second outer prākāra of Sundaresvarar's sanctum provide glimpses of surviving pandyan architectural traditions in the portions below the sikhara. The sikharas in them have been very much touched by later renovation enthusiasts. The early Lingam's installed in them have been removed and new ones installed; and luckily two of these old Lingams have survived. All belong to the medieval period.<sup>28</sup>

The architecture under the Imperial Pandyas commencing with Sataiyavarma Kulasekhara (1162-1175) assumed new dimensions. There were new temple constructions, few and far between, however the Pandyas concentrated in encircling the already existing shrines with compound walls in and creating Gopuras. This was not a new phase in temple architecture for in the songs of Gñāṇasambandar, he refers to Gopuras and MATILS (compound walls). His song on Madurai specifically refers to 'KAPĀLI NIḻ KATI MATIL' and GOPURA at the ALAVĀI Shrine.<sup>29</sup>

The Imperial Pandyas devoted great care in the expansion of the Madurai temple. The three tiered Svami SANNIDHI Gopura, the two tiered Amman SANNIDHI Gopura were built during the time of Kulasekhara Pandya (1190-1216).<sup>30</sup> Kulasekhara Pandya in addition to his building the sanctum and entrance Gōpura of Sundarēśvara and Mīṇākshi also built the compound wall around the first PRĀKĀRA-perhaps renovating the wall which existed even during the days of Gñāṇasambandar (7th century) and referred to in his TEVARAM, as mentioned earlier. For the first time in the Pandya country, temples for PARIVĀRA deities appear around the central shrine complex.

Kulasekhara built a temple for Ayyanar, in the East Masi Street. The temple now serves as a lorry shed. On the South Masi Street, a temple for Saptamātrikās was built. The idols were removed to Sundarēśvara's shrine and the old Pandyan Vimana has been encroached upon. The temple building itself serves as a Bank's Godown. Kulasekhara Pandya built on the west, a Perumal Temple and dug out a tank, in front of it. A church has been built in the place where once existed the Perumal temple. On the North, the Pandya built a temple for Kāli. This

temple exists today and is presently known as Chellattammal temple. The re-built temple walls have a number of Pandya Inscriptions.

The unique features in Pandyan architecture as already pointed out or the MATILS and Gōpuras. This MATILS were called Sundara Pandya Tirumatils and the building of the Gopuras too are attributed to the same monarch. At the Madurai temple three Sundara Pandyans were responsible for the temple expansion. They are Maravarma Sundara Pandyan (1216-1235), Maravarman Sundara Pandyan (1236-1253) and Jatavarma Sundara Pandyan (1251-1268). These three monarchs have taken great interest in the expansion of temple activities. The Eastern Gopura at Tiruvanaikka temple is also known as Sundara Pandya Gopura, perhaps built by Jatavarma Sundara Pandya (1251-1268). He extended the Pandyan territory to Nellore and Cuddappah in Andhra Pradesh. One of the towers of Tiruvannamalai temple (N. A. District) is attributed to this monarch.<sup>81</sup>

The Viceroys of the Vijayanagara Empire and later the Nayaks continued the construction of Gopuras and adding PRĀKĀRAS to the already existing temples. Except the two Gopuras, the East and the West of the Madurai temple the other Gopuras were constructed under the Nayak period.

Numerous Vishnu temples have sprung up under the Vijayanagar and Nayak periods; especially in the Palayam (poligar) areas like Nilakkottai. These temples were simple village temples run on the endowments created by the munificent palayakārs. In the survey of the temples in the Madurai District that is being published, it would be seen that these temples are built within a period of 300 years.

## **SCULPTURAL ART :**

The sculptural art of the Pandyas had its beginnings in the Cave temples of Sēvalpaṭṭi, Piranmalai, Pillayarpaṭṭi, Kuṇṇakkudī, Tirukalākkudī in the Ramanathapuram District, in the cave temples of Tiruparamkuṇṇam, Anamalai, Kunnattur in the Madurai District. The figures Jyeshṭha, Lakshmi, Saptamatrikas, Viṣṇu, Somas-

kanda panel. Subrahmanya panel Durga panel, Ganesa, Bhuvaneswari are the finest carvings attempted during the 8th century. At Anamalai, Narasimha, Valli and Muruka with the two Dvarapalaka are found. These too are contemporaneous with the Tiruparamkunram Cave. Tiruparamkunram Cave on the Southern side of the hill contains an Ardhanāri in a sanctum and Subrahmanya accompanied by Valli and Deivayanai in the mandapam. The wall panels of the Vishnu temples in the Northern caves of Tiruparamkunram also deserve mention. The wall panels of Vishnu temple depict , Varāha lifting up Bhū from the bowels of the sea. Vishnu on the Adishesha with its hoods giving him a head cover. Lakshmi is holding his feet while Garuda is sitting in attendance.

Ugra Narasimha tearing the bowels of Hiranyakasipu is the theme of the third panel.

In the Siva temple the wall contains the CATURNATANA of Siva. This is watched by Uma standing by his side with the vīshabha mount behind her. Devas are watching the nṛta while a Gaṇa is beating the drum.

In the medieval period, the Sculptural Art of the Pandyas in the structural temples did not flower much as in the case of the Colas. The Pandyan sculptural Art was restricted to the figures in the several tiers of the Vimana which in many cases were of stone. The KOSHṬHA figures of this period were incomparable to the contemporary Cola figures in the KOSHṬHAS. However after the 15th century, the successors of the pandyas in the Madurai District experimented with pillar sculptures and Sculptural Art during the Nayak period assumed new dimensions.

The experiments were mainly carried out in the Madurai Temple where a super-abundance of pillar sculptures exist. The pillar sculptures are of two types. The first group containing portrait sculptures and the second category containing figures of Gods and Goddesses.

Portrait sculptures have been carved from the days of the Pallavas and during the Cola period they occupied important places in the temple structures.<sup>32</sup> But in the Pandya territory, no portrait sculpture is seen till the middle of the 16th century; though their

existence is known in the Vijayanagar kingdom in the North. SUKRANĪTĪ<sup>33</sup> places an embargo on the portrayal of secular images (maṭṭyabimba) with characteristic features well brought out. The text considers that it is not beneficial. Evidently this direction prohibited the portrayal of the portrait sculptures till the Nayak period. Even here, the figures were not realistic and stylisation of the portrayal and an element of distortion were attempted. Apart from certain characteristic macro-features, two or three portraits of the same king, differed from each other.<sup>34</sup>

The pillar sculptures depicting all the twenty five forms (vimsati) of Siva in one place are seen at the Madurai temple.<sup>35</sup> The other pillar sculptures noteworthy in the Kampattaṭi maṇḍapam are the Aghōra and agni Vīrabhadras, Kālī and Urdhvatāṇḍava. The figures of Sadāśiva and Gayatri deserve a special study because both are TANTRIC forms and their inclusion in the Siva temple and that too right at the entrance Gopura reveal a systematic attempt at the anthropomorphic depiction of tantric forms in the temple.

#### **Western Influence :**

The thousand pillared hall presents us a series of figures which have received new treatment, a treatment that fundamentally differed from the traditional approach to Sculptural Art. Here we see a series of sculptures abounding with surface realism—a characteristic feature of the Renaissance Art. History provides a clue. A number of Hiudu artists who helped in the building up of the St. Francis Church at Gao, and who had been exposed to the Art of the Renaissance period, had sought refuge in the court of Krishnappa Nayakkar (1564-1572) and with their help, the thousand pillared hall was built up. No wonder the sculpture of Virali, to cite just one instance is replete with surface realism. Not all the sculptures of the thousand pillared hall contain characteristic Western techniques of depiction. There are also figures done in the traditional style and also a blended of both traditional and Western.<sup>36</sup> An experiment of an intensive depth seems to have been carried out here for inducting certain new aspects of the knowledge of the anatomy learnt during the Renaissance period. This approach had not been followed up; perhaps it was resisted. The sculptures of the Vīravasantha maṇḍapam executed during

the period of Virappa Nayakar-just 25 years later, did not exhibit the surface realism of some of the sculptures of the thousand pillared hall; although the sculptors had learnt the art of dynamic projection of the postures, the figures exhibit at a moment of time. The four figures-eight handed Kālī, eight handed Virabhadra, a man carrying a woman and the figure of a Goddess, have a repose characteristic of Indian Art and dynamism a feature of the Western Art. The figures in the Mutali maṇḍapam and Kiḷikūṭṭu maṇḍapam in the Madurai temple, are traditional depictions.

The best sculptures are those at the derelict, Rayar Gopuram to the East of the Pudumaṇḍapam. Here the sculptures exhibit the sculptors maturity having benefited by a study of Western Art features in the thousand pillared hall. The sculptures though small in size are the handiwork of those who have re-studied the art forms. Indian traditional Art depicted here reflects the reabsorption of the Western technique into the traditional Art learnt by rote.

A few more pillar sculptures in the temples of the Madurai District, need to be discussed here. All these were sculpted between the middle 17th to middle 18th centuries. The sculptures of Soundararaja Perumal temple in Dindugal Taluk belongs to the late Nayakar period; perhaps done during the Maṅgamma period (1690-1704). It would be pertinent to note the political activity during this short segment of time noted above. There were Highways connecting important towns for movement of pilgrims, trade and during exigencies, troops. These Highways in the Pandya territory were known as 'MAṆGAMMA SĀLAI'-a name given to the Highways by her grateful subjects as a testimony to the interest the Queen Maṅgamma took for their welfare. Troops were stationed at important towns connecting the Highways. The army regained a unit like 'the Sappers and Miners Corps' of the present day-men technically qualified in shaping the arms, repairing the tools and in putting up construction at short notice, These items of work rightly belonged to the Visvakarmas the traditional craftsmen. During peace times they ought to have attended to the carving of the pillars, constructing pillared halls.

One such cantonment ought to have stayed at Tadicombu. The pillar sculptures at this place sharply resemble those at Alagar temple, Tirumogur, Perur (Coimbatore), Krishnapuram (Tirunelveli District). At these places the sculptures though of different themes, yet in the style of cutting and in the techniques of presentation seem to have a silken thread linking them up by the approach to sculptural Art.

Opposite to the sanctum of the Goddess at Tadicombu is the hall of pillar sculptures. Here one witnesses an array of sculptures, the usual Rati and Manmatha, ASHṬHABHUJA Vishṇu on Garuda, Nataraja in Urdhvatāṇḍava posture with his uplifted right leg and near this the ASHṬHABHUJA Kālī competing with him. The CATURBHUJA Vishnu seated on the Sesha with its hood as a canopy and a PRAPANNA standing at his foot; DVIBHUJA Rama on Hanuman, are other noteworthy sculptures. The best of these pieces, is the dynamic Cakkarattālvār, the anthropomorphic form of Cakra with sixteen hands. It is a magnificent piece executed with great skill. His right hands carry a CAKRA, PARASU, BĀNA, PĀSA, AGNI, HAḬA and GADA. The left hands carry SAṆKHA, DHANUS, KHADGA, TRISULA, AṆKUSA, MUDGARA and PRĀSA. The head gear is JVĀLA MAKUṬA.

The portrait figures at the Palani temple are of regional style as also the pillar sculptures at Periyavuṭaiyanāyaki temple. The portraits are the statuaries of the poligars of Palani and are in the Mīnākshi maṇḍapa.

The pillar sculptures at the Kalameka Perumal temple at Tirumogur belong to the Nayak period and are most enchanting. The KAMPATTATṬI maṇḍapam contains Yālī pillar sculptures. The portrait sculptures of the Marutu brothers are at this temple. The Garuda maṇḍapa contains the most exquisite depiction of Manmata and Rati. The pillar sculptures of Rama with Sita and Lakshmana, Ānjanēya are fine productions.

A survey of Architecture and Sculpture made herein will reveal the chief characteristics of the Pandyan Art. It is not exuberant like the Colas, but still in its own way, it has a place in the evolution of Architecture and Sculpture in this



part of the country. Pandyan Art has not been studied in all its depth so far. It is the approach the Pandyas had to temple expansion, by way of adding massive compound walls and creating PRĀKĀRAS, by the construction of sky-high Gopuras, that had inspired the Vijayanagar kings to follow suit. There may not be many temples that the Pandya kings built in Madurai District, but still their names will be cherished as belonging to a dynasty which had shown way for successive generations for the expansion of temples with a number of prakaras and maṇḍapams. The Sundara Pandyakuraṭu has become a by-word for the storied cloistered maṇḍapams around the temple sanctums; so also the Pandyas had carved themselves a niche in the History of Temple Art by the massive Gopuras they had constructed in both Tamil Nadu and in the area of their occupation in Andhra Pradesh.

#### THE TEMPLES OF THE MADURAI DISTRICT:

For the first time a reckoning of the temples of Tamil Nadu was made by the Indian census organisation. The reports of this reckoning was published as Part XI (D) of the census of India 1961 publication Vol. IX Part XI-D of these Volumes relate to the Temples of Madurai and Ramanathapuram Districts. A meticulous attempt has been made to collect certain basic data regarding temples, their location, principal deity, annual income, extent of immovable and movable assets, vahanams, rituals held and festivals conducted. Though the data collected leaves much to be desired by a student of Research, for the modus operandi of collection is by way of reports which were not subjected to close scrutiny, still what has been done is a stupendous task.

The Madurai District contained according to the computation 486 temples. Of these temples 440 are managed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable/Endowment (Administration) Department Tamil Nadu, and the rest are managed by private trusts. Amongst these Viṣṇu temples are the largest numbering 121, and next comes the temples dedicated to village deities numbering 104. Siva temples are 91, while Mūṛuga temples are 19. Fiftynine temples are dedicated to Vinayaka and 92 for other deities. 477 temples in this District receive pūjas and in 205 of these Brahmins (Sivāccāriars for Sivas temples

and Bhaṭṭāccāriars for Viṣṇu temples officiate as priests. The other temples receive pūjas from priests belonging to Pillai, Naidu, Nayakkar, Velar (Potters), Kannadiar, Goundar. Tevar and Pandaram Communities.

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# **The Temples of Ramanathapuram District**

S. LAKSHMANAN

The Ramanathapuram District was a part of the old Pāṇṭiya nāṭu which was praised as “Pāṇṭiya nāṭē paḷam patiyākum”<sup>1</sup> It has presently been divided into three Districts as Kāmarāj District, Rāmanāthapuram District and Pasumpon Muthurāmaliṅgam District.

According to the census of 1961 there are 518 temples<sup>2</sup>. Out of these 518 temples 355 are under Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments, 91 are under Śivagaṅga Samasthānam, 56 are under Rāmanāthapuram Samasthānam, six are under Ainthu koyil Devas-thanam and ten are under private managements. Out of 518 temples 189 are Śiva temples, 72 are Viṣṇu temples, 26 are Murukan temples, 98 are Sakti and village goddesses temples, 56 are Vinayāka temples and 77 temples are other minor deities. These temples belong to a segment of time from 5th B.C. to 19th century. During my field study I have discovered some dilapidated temples with beautiful icons and remarkable inscriptions.

Siva temples at Injār (Sivakasi Taluk-Tk.), Cheṭṭikurucci (Tirupathur Tk.), Veḷiaṅkudipaṭṭi (Tirupathur Tk) and Arumūri maṅgalam are remarkable. Our ancestors laid great emphasis on temple worship in their lives. The temples were not only prayer halls but also served as educational institutions,<sup>3</sup> hospitals,<sup>4</sup> record offices,<sup>5</sup> recreation centres<sup>6</sup> and local administrative sabhas.<sup>7</sup> Here we can recall the words of our great poetess Auvaīyār “Kōvililla ūril kuṭi irukkavēṇṭā”<sup>8</sup>. Now I classify them under the heads of cave temples. Śiva temples, Viṣṇu temples, Śakthi temples, Vināyakar temples, Murukan temples, historically important temples and newly found out ancient temples.

## **CAVE TEMPLES OR ROCK-CUT TEMPLES :**

Before the christian era the Jain monks used the natural caverns as their dwelling places. The Buddhists and Hindus also utilised the caves as chaityas and temples. Many rock-cut caves

were excavated by the Buddhist and Hindus before 2nd B.C.<sup>9</sup> The architecture of excavating rock-cut temples was followed by Chaḷukyas, Pāṇḍyās, Pallavas and Muttariars of the Southern region. Some scholars say that this cave art was practised by the Pallavas and then followed by the Pāṇṭiyās. The first rock-cut temple was excavated by Mamalla in the 7th century A.D.<sup>10</sup> But the date of the Piḷḷaiyārpaṭṭi is 5—6th century A.D. according to the Brahmi inscriptions in the cave.<sup>11</sup> So the Pāṇṭiyās might have introduced the art at first in Tamil Nadu. These are rock-cut temples in Araḷipparai, Piḷḷaiyārpaṭṭi, Mahipālanpaṭṭi, Kuṇṇakuṭi, Tirumalai, Sēvalpaṭṭi, Paḷḷimaṭam and Mūvaraiveṇṇān. In some places there are inscriptions of late periods about 10th to 14th century A.D.

### **Some Remarkable Features of the Rock Cut Temples :**

1. Kuṇṇakuṭi: Kuṇṇakuṭi is very near to Kāraikkudi. There are three cave temples with latter inscription of Pāṇṭiyās and Chōḷas. The caves are at the bottom of the hill. Liṅgōtbhava and Natarāja are the finest images to be seen. The original stone sculptures are covered by lime and mortar and painted over.<sup>12</sup>

2. Mahipālanpaṭṭi: Mahipālanpaṭṭi is a small village situated between Nerkuppaai and Tirupattur. It is the birth place of the renowned Sangam poet 'Kaṇiaṇ Pūṇkuṇṇār', who sang "Yādum ūrē yāvarum kēḷir" and the scholar Paṇḍithamani Kathirēsan Cheṭṭiar. This place was also known as Pūṇkuṇṇam. Māravarman Sundara Pāṇṭiyā's inscription of 12th century calls this place as "Pūṇkuṇṇa nāttup pūṇkuṭi". There are two cells, One is occupied by a Liṅga with the square piṭa and the other is by Lord Gaṇēśa who resembles as the Vināyaka of Piḷḷaiyārpaṭṭi cave. This icon has four hands, but the upper two hands hold sugarcane. Indeed it is a remarkable feature.<sup>13</sup>

3. Mūvaraiveṇṇān: This rock-cut temple is isolated from the surrounding villages and in the midst of quarry. Additional buildings and Kāmakōṭṭam should have been erected by the latter Pāṇṭiyās. There are dilapidated inscriptions of Māravarman Sundara Pāṇḍiyan (13th cen. A.D.). In latter days some parts of the temples and the face of the Vināyaka would have been damaged. The Liṅgam has square piṭa, a typical patters

which belongs to the Pāṇṭiyā country. The Vināyaka resembles the old type though it has four hands. There are sculptures of Natarāja and Subrahmaṇya with Vaḷḷi and Deivayāṇai.<sup>14</sup>

4. Piḷḷaiyārpatti: Piḷḷaiyārpatti temple is an important one in the history of Tamil Nadu. It is an ancient and wealthy temple too. This Vināyaka temple is considered to be the first. It will be discussed below elaborately.<sup>15</sup>

5. Pirānmalaḷ: There are two temples here, one is at the bottom of the hill and the other is situated at the highest place of the hill, which could be reached with the help of the stone staircase and is called 'Maṅkai pākar temple'. The Maṅkaipākar is in "Tirumaṇakkolam". Most of the indologists call it as Siva and Parvati. But, the great scholar Dr. A. V. Jeyechandrun identifies as Murukan and Vaḷḷi.<sup>16</sup>

6. Sēvalpatti: Sēvalpatti is a small village in Sāthūr Tk. Two handed Vināyaka, Natarāja with Jaṭāohāra and Viṣṇu are the great symbols of Pantiya architecture. One cannot see such a Natarāja anywhere in Tamil country.<sup>17</sup>

7. Tirukalakudi: Tirukkalakudi and Paḷḷimaṭam caves will be discussed below.

8. Tirumalai: Though it is a lonely temple on a hill covered with trees and bushes, once it was a part of the mercantile city Aḷakamānēri, which is still a small village two km. away from Tirumalai. The beautiful statue of Kalyāṇasundarar may be compared with that Pirānmalaḷ and Āṇaimalaḷ Lādan Koyil. Here Murukan has only two hands and the cock as banner. At the bottom there are the goat and peacock also. He has no consorts here.<sup>18</sup>

## SIVA TEMPLES :

Saivism is considered to be the earliest religion of India, particularly in Tamil Nadu. Lord Siva is marked as the premier God in the Hindu pantheon. One of the Āḷvārs of the Vaishnava cult praises him as "Oruvaṇēṇru ēttaniṇṇa naḷir maticcaṭaiyaṇ enko".<sup>19</sup> According to the Saiva faith there are

14 important Siva temples in Pāṇṭiya maṇḍalam (Pāṇṭi patināṇku). Seven out of the fourteen are in this District. They are Tirukkoḍunkunṇam or Pirāṇmalai (Tiruppathur Tk.), Tiruvāḍāṇai (Tiruvāḍāṇai Tk.), Kaḷayarkoyil, Tiruppuvanam, Tiruccuḷi (Sivaganga Tk.) and Rāmēs'waram (Rāmēśwaram Tk.). Tirukkoḍunkunṇam, Tiruppathur, Tiruppuvanam, Tiruccuḷi, Kaḷayarkoyil and Rāmēs'waram were visited and sung by Tevaram hymnists, Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar. We shall analyse some of the important temples.

1. Chaturakiri : Chaturakiri is an important hill station situated in the midst of the thickest forest of tall trees at the height of 4000 ft. from the bottom of the Western Ghats. It is 18 k. m. away from Watrap and could be reached by walk. At the time of "Āḍiammāvāsai" lakhs of people come here to worship the God. Some people believe that Siddhars and Rishis are living here. Sri Mahalingam temple is here. Jothi trees which shine at night are found here. Very rare herbs are also available.

2. Chaturvēdimangalam : There are many Chaturvēdimangalams, which mean the settlements of Brahmins who are well versed in the four Vedas. The village was called Nirupasekharachaturvēdimangalam in 12th century. The name of the Śiva is Rudrakoṭīswarar and the name of the goddess is Maṭṭuvārkuḷali. So this village is called now Maṭṭiyūr, popularly. This temple was held in great esteem by the merchant community of Ariviyūr. A resident of Ariviyūr installed the images of Naṭaraja, Uma, Aḷudaiyapiḷḷaiyār, Dakshiṇāmūrti and Tirunāvukkarasu Devar. In the reign of Kulottuṅga III there was a monastery called Tiruṅnānasambandar guhai. One Vīramāḷagia Nishādarājan gifted a land for supplying food for the pilgrims halting here.<sup>20</sup>

3. Cholapuram : (Rājapāḷayam Tk.) - There are two temples one for Lord Śiva and the other Viṣṇu. The Chola king who lost his eyes at Seithur in a fight, with a Pāṇṭiyā king got them after praying to Śiva at this place. Hence this place came to be known as Cholapuram. The Śiva temple stands on the western bank of the river Dēvanathi and was built in



the period of Vikrama Pāṇṭiyā. The god and goddess are known as Viṇapāṇṭīśwarar and Kuḷalvōimoli amman. According to the inscription of this temple Chalapuram is a corruption of Cholānthakapuram.<sup>21</sup>

4. Devathanam : The temple of Nachātai tāvīrtā perumān and Tavamperranāyaki is situated 3 k.m away from the village of Devathanam. It is considered to be Ākāsakēshtram. In the fights between Pāṇṭiyās and Cholas, the god helped and protected the Pāṇṭiyā kings. The Chola who could not defeat the Pāṇṭiyā king decided to kill him treacherously. So he sent a cloth soaked in poison as a presentation. As the king was warned by the god in his dream, he defeated the plan by directing the messenger to wear it himself. One of the inscriptions of this temple speaks about “Eḷuttaṇi maṇḍapam” in the temple.<sup>22</sup>

5. Dēvipaṭṭiṇam : Dēvipaṭṭiṇam alias Navapāshāṇam is a sea-shore village, which is famous for Navagraha stones. Nine stones are embedded in the sea, a few yards from the shore, which could be reached by walk and worshipped by the pilgrims. The people believe that the stones were installed by Rama, when he worshipped the Navagrahas. There is a Siva temple called Tilakēśwarar and Soundaryanāyaki. An inscription of this temple calls this place Olagamādēvipaṭṭiṇam.

6. Ilayānkudi : Ilayānkudi is the birth place of Ilayānkudi Māra Nāyanār, one of the 63 Saiva saints. He has been immortalised by Sēkkiḷār in his PERIYAPURĀṆAM. Koccatappan, a king worshipped Śiva in this shrine for a progeny. Because of a curse Indra was born as a child to the king and the place was called Indrāvatāranallūr. The temple of Rajendra Cholīswarar was built by Rajendran Cholan. An inscription of Cholanādu koṇṭa Sundarapāṇṭiyaṇ calls this place “Vaṭavallat tirukkai iḷāṇkuṭiyāṇa Indirāvatāranallūr”.<sup>23</sup>

7. Iḷayāttāṇkuṭi : Iḷayāttāṇkuṭi is the corruption of Iḷaiṇṇu-ārrum-kuṭi. The legend says the lord Indra, Devas and Kaṇṇuva Muṇivar were troubled Sūrāpanmaṇ. They were loitering everywhere in search of salvation. When they reached this

place they found solace and satisfaction. Hence this place got this name. The Siva temple of Kailāśanatar and Nityakalyāṇi is about 1000 years old and also one of the nine temples of Nāṭṭukkottai Nagaratar, which is renovated by them. The adhithānam of Maha Devendra Saraswathy Swamigal, 65th line of Sri Kānci Kāmakōṭi pīṭhā is attached to this temple. A sadas was conducted by Sri Saṅkarāchārya of Kānci during his stay from 1961 to 1963 in this village<sup>24</sup>.

8. Kalayārkoyil: This is one of the fourteen sacred pāṇṭiyā temples and sung by Sambandar and Sundarar. Though the name is derived from Kalīswarar' the god of the temple, the old name of this village is Tirukkāṇappēriyal. The temple of Kalayār kōyil is a very large and handsome building surrounded by a strong stone wall. Three shrines are found within the big compound wall. They are Kalīswarar, Somēswarar and Sundaresar; Somēswarar representing sthūla, Kalīswarar representing sūkshma and Sundarēswarar representing kāma. The first is the oldest temple, and was sung by Sambandar and Sundarar. The smaller Northern tower was built in the period of Varaguṇapāṇṭiyan. The new 151 ft. tower was erected by Maruthu Pāṇṭiyans. In order to catch Marutu who had gone underground, Col. Agnew proclaimed that if he did not surrender within a period, the big tower within a period, the big tower will be destroyed. So Veḷḷaimarutu sacrificed his life in order to save the lofty gopuram. During the period of Muslim invasion the idols of Śrīraṅgam temple were brought here for safe custody. Āṇaimaṭu, the big tank on the Southern side of the temple is a replica of Mariamman tank at Madurai. In the middle of the tank, there is a maṇḍapam called Mīnakshi maṇḍapam which looks like a small temple with a gopuram. Āgama, Tēvara schools are functioning here and are patronised by Saiva Mutts<sup>25</sup>.

9. Kōvilūr: Because of the beautiful temple the place is called Kovilūr. Vīrapāṇṭiyā, a pious king came here when the place was a dense forest. Due to his tiredness he slept under a Vaṇṇi tree, laying his sword, which was given by lord Kalīswara, on his side. On waking up he found his sword missing.

When he was searching for the sword he noticed a Liṅga in a bush and built a temple. So the lord is known as Korṛavā-ḷis'warar. The name of the goddess is Tirunellaiamman. The temple is under the management of Sivagaṅga Dēvasthanam, Kovilūrmaṭam which is an important religious institution has branches in Chidambaram, Tirukaḷār and Tiruvaṇṇāmalai.<sup>26</sup>

10. Māriyūr: Here is an old temple of Puvanti nāṭar and Pavalaniṅga valli. The temple is said to have been founded by one Durma gandha/Mahaṛshi and Varuṇa Bagavan. One day a lady polluted the place. Angered at this the Rishi cursed her to become barren. In turn she spelt that the temple in which the Ṛshi is worshipping would be drowned by a sand storm. Thumbicci Nayak, a powerful Palayakār under Krishnapanayak of Madurai kingdom accidentally discovered the summit of the temple when he came here for hunting. He removed the sand and worshipped the lord. When he entered the sanctum he found flowers on the Liṅgam and a burning lamp, as if puja had been performed just then. So the god was known as Pūvētinātar. It is a coastal village on the Gulf of Mannar lying 9 k.m. South East of Kadalāḍi in the Mudukulathur Tk.

11. Māttūr: Konganar one of the eighteen siddhars converted copper into gold and tested it here. So this place is named as Māṛṛūr or Māttūr. The Ainūṛṛīśwarar, Periya Nāyaki temple is one of the Nagarathar temple. The name Ainūṛṛīśwarar certainly will induce us to recognise the merchantaile guild, Thicaiāyirattuainūṛṛuvar.

12. Māṇāmadurai: The Somanathaswamy, Anandavalli temple is built according to the local legend, by God Candra in order to get relief from the curse of Takkan. The gopuram was designed to be 1/5th of the height of the Kalayār koyil temple by Marudu brothers. The Lingam was in white marble. Chittirai festival is the most important one.<sup>27</sup>

13. Nāyanār koyil: This place is known originally as Tirumarudūr, because a Lingam was found in the midst of the thickest Marudu forest. The dumb daughter of Mullah Sahib, a

commander of Bijapur Sultan worshipped the Lingam and pronounced the name of the Lingam as Nāyaṇār. From that day onwards people called this place as Nāyaṇār koyil.

The temple under the management of Ramanathapuram Samasthanam is dedicated to Arulmigu Nāganātar and Soundaravalli. Tradition says that Ādisēsha performed pūja, hence the Lord is called Nāganātar, meaning thereby the lord of serpents. In order to hear the music of Namadevar, the God is facing west. Within the temple, just behind the Lingam, God is said to have appeared to the devotees in the form of a serpent under the Marudu tree. The devotees offer egg at the place and take away the mud under the tree. Festivals are celebrated in the month of Ādi and Tai. Formerly this place was a Jain centre. We can see a Jain statue also on the bank of the tank.<sup>28</sup>

14. Paḷḷimaḍam : Paḷḷimaḍam is a corruption of Paḷḷippaḍai. Some inscriptions say "paruttikkudi nāṭṭu paḷḷipaḍayāṇa sundarapāṇḍisuram". So it may be a temple which has been erected on the samathi of some 'Sundarapāṇṭiā'. Here is a rock cut temple too.<sup>29</sup>

15. Pirāṇmalai : The oldest name of this place was Tirukkodumkuṇṇam. Sambandar who visited the place, called the lord as Tirukkodumkuṇṇaiśwarar. The temple which is at bottom of the hill is called Tirukkodumkuṇṇaiswaaram. Mangai-bhagar with his consort in Kalyāṇa Tirukōlam is in a rock-cut temple at the top. Below this temple there is a small temple for Bairava, called Vaḍukabairavar. On the Eastern side of the main temple there is a temple called "chokkanātar kōyil" which bears an important inscription about the tax levied by the merchants of various nāḍus and nagarams.<sup>30</sup>

16. Rāmēswaram : It is situated in a Island and visited by the pilgrims coming from all the places in India. Here Sri Rāma worshipped Śiva in the form of a Liṅga, before going to Lanka in search of Sita, his wife who was taken by the mighty Rāvana, the audacious king of Lanka. The temple was built by a Ceylonese king at first and in due course many parts of the temple were built by Pāṇṭiyās, Sētupathis, Nāyaks, Nāṭṭukkōṭṭai cheṭṭiyārs and other

individuals. Stones were brought from Ambasamudram in Tirunelveli Dt. The total length of the four corridors is 3850 ft. There are about 120 pillars in the third corridor. The entire area of the temple, inside the compound is about 16 acres. The Chokkaṭṭān maṇḍapam is a place to be seen. There are more than 30 sacred pools (tīrttaṅgaḷ) in and around the temple. Kanthamāparvatam, Agastiar, Lakshmi, and Śiva Sarvatīrttams are remarkable. Most of them are wells. The name of the God is Rāmanāthaswamy and the Goddess is Parvatavarthaṇi. The pilgrims who go to Banaras must come to this place to worship God. The big Nandi is of Sutai, measuring 22x12x17½ and has been repainted now with Panccavarṇa colours.<sup>31</sup>

17. Sākkotṭai : Sākkotṭai is mentioned in the lithic records in the Vīrasākaramuṭaiyār, Umaiyāmpikai temple as Saiakkaḷūr situated in Perumbur nāḍu, a sub-division of Keralasinga vaḷanāḍu. Legend ascribes that one vīran, a hunter while digging the earth for roots struck at a Lingam and blood oozed out from it. On seeing it he swooned. His wife came to comprehend what it was prayed to the wounded Linga to forgive her husband. Both the husband and wife thereafter began to worship the Lord daily. Kandan, a Chola king who was suffering from leprosy came to this place on pilgrimage and stayed here. By the grace of the God he was cured. He constructed a temple, and a tank in front of the temple which is called "Cholan Tank" even today.<sup>32</sup>

18. Salaigrāmam : The temple of Varaguniśwarar belonged to the 9th century A.D. according to the inscription. The Goddess is called Tirukāmakotīswari. An inscription of Kocadayan Māraṇ says "The village Salaigrāmam is situated in Tūvār-kurram alias Maimakāra vaḷa nāḍu, a devadhana, brahmadeya village granted to God Varaguniśwara. The local legend says that in Salaigrāmam, a stone was found while digging the Gangai ūraṇi. So the place got this name, Salaigrāmam.

19. Sivakasi : Arikēsari Parākramapāṇṭiyaṇ erected a temple at Tenkasi and fetched a Linga for installation from Banaras. On his return he was unavoidably detained at Sivakasi, which was then a forest. As the auspicious time arrived he installed the Linga and built a temple. So the place is called as Sivakasi.

20. Thāyumāṇavar Samādhi : Saint Thāyumāṇavar, a Saivite Siddha of 18th century came to Ramanathapuram and lived in a nearby village, now called Lakshmipuram. A temple has been erected on the spot where he entered samadhi. Swami Sidbhananda of Ramakrishna Tapovanam, Tiruparaiturai reconstructed the samadhi elaborately and looks after it.

21. Tiruccuḷi : Tiruccuḷi, that is, Tiruccuḷial was for a long time the head quarters of a taluk in Ramanathapuram Setupati's estate. It is on the bank of the river Gundār, 12 k.m. away from Aruppukkottai and sung by Sundarar. At the end of Dvaparayuga a deluge occurred as usual and the people in the town were in danger of being drowned. In response to the prayer of the king, Siva made a hole with his sūlam in the earth and made all the water sink through it and saved them. Hence forth the place was called Tiruccuḷial and Avathānapuram in Sanskrit. The temple was built by Pāvana Pāṇṭiyā.

In Kritayuga the Goddess were named as Praḷaya Rudrā and Manickamalai. Kasyapa and Bargava muṇis performed penances under a Puṇṇai tree.

In Tirthayuga they were called Bhūminātar and Muktamalai. Bhāratvāja and Parāsara Ṛshis made penance under a mango tree.

In Dvāparayuga the Lord and his consort bore the names of Kalyāṇasundarar and Svarṇamālai. It is said the saints Kous'ika and Diksha obtained mōksha after penancing under a tree.

In this Kali age Siva and Pārvati are worshipped, calling them Tirumaṇinātar and Tuṇaimālai amman. Goudhamar and Nandikesvara performed penance under an Arasu tree.

Parakrama Pantiya, Hemanata, a Chera king, Arjuna, Būmidevi and Kouṇḍilya Ṛshi also did penance here to fulfil their wills. This is the birth place of Ramaṇa Maḥaṛshi. Here is a beautiful statue of Nataraja which is made of herbs.<sup>84</sup>

22. Tirukkōlakuṭy : Now the name is spelt as Tiru-Kala-Kuṭy. According to the legend Kakōla muṇivar did penance here and obtained the grace of the God and the place was named after him as Tirukōlakuṭy. There are temples of Satavagīs'warar and Maragatavalli, Subramaniam and S'ivadharmapurīs'warar with his

consort Sivagami. The idol of Patanjali is worthy of note for its conception and design. There is a grand rock-cut temple, perhaps one of the biggest in South India. Once this place was considered a Jain centre.<sup>35</sup> The temple has an important inscription about the Muslim invasion.

23. Tirupattūr: The ancient temple of Tiruttaḷinātar was visited and sung by Appar and Sambandar in the 7th century A.D. The purāṇa says that Vālmiki did penance here. Hence this place is called "Vālmikipuram" in Sanskrit and Tiruppattūr in Tamil.

There is a separate sannidhi for Yoga Bhairava. The idol is in a rare posture of penance, majestic and attractive. People in this area make special pūja and offerings to Lord Bhairava. He is considered the protecting deity of the place.

The statues of Jayanathan, Viṣṇu and Mahalakshmi are remarkable and belong to the period of early Pāṇṭiyās. There is a separate maṇḍapa for Nataraja and called "Gowri tāṇḍava maṇḍapam" Jayanātanpūja is celebrated every year during the first Friday of Citirai. Koṅḷai is the sacred tree of this place. To the West of this temple is an old Pāṇṭiya Siva temple too.<sup>36</sup>

At the time of Muslim invasion the temple was occupied and destroyed by the Muhamadan army. Vijayālayadevan of Surai-kuppy repaired and renovated the temple. The city witnessed the fight of Palayakar wars of Marudus. The temple is rich with inscriptions which are historically most important.

Pūmāyīamman temple, which occupies the Southern part of the city, attracts large crowd in and around Tiruppattūr during the Pūccōḷal festival. There is a statue of Navakaṇḍa offering inside the temple. The temple is considered as that of Saptama-trika by Dr. S. Jayabarathi (Malaysia) who is a native of Siṅgam-punēri.<sup>37</sup>

24. Tiruppāchetti: Tiru-pa-chetti. All of us know the competition between Tirugnānasambandar and Jains. At that time the palm leaves of Jains which were thrown in the Vaigai floated down the stream along the current and washed ashore at this place. While the palm leaves of the Saivites swam against the current upstream and rested at Tiruvēṭakam, near Mudurai.

It is said traditionally that the temple of Tirunokkia Alakiaswamy was erected by King Nala. Marudu brothers presented a Marakatha Liṅgam and constructed the Amman temple.

25. Tiruppuvaṇam: Tiruppuvaṇam means "the sacred flower garden". According to the Sthalapuraṇa Dhārmaraḥa threw the bones of his father into the Vaigai water and all of them changed into flowers. So the village is named as Tiruppuvaṇam. The famous Pūvanātaswāmy temple, sung by Mūvar is situated on the Southern bank of river Vaigai. As per Tiruviḷaiyāḍal purāṇam, Dāsi Ponnanayāl made golden image of Lord Śiva, with the help of a Siddha who changed all her brass vessels into gold. Images of Tirumalainayakkar and his consort, Cokkappanayakkar, Vallabha Siddhar and Ponnanayāl, the dancing girl are to be seen in this temple.<sup>38</sup> There is a common belief among the people in this area that "one who dies at Tiruppuvaṇam will reach Svarga."

26. T. M. Kottai: T. M. Kottai is the abbreviation of Tirumāl-Ukantān-Kōṭṭai. It is supposed that Tirumāl worshipped Śiva at this place. So it is named Tirumālukantān Kōṭṭai. One of the inscriptions in the Cencātainātar temple "Eṇivīrapaṭṭinam" which was a merchantile city. Now it is not traceable.

27. Tiruvāḍāṇai: The sthalapurāṇam narrates that the son of Varuṇa was curshed to be born in the form of an elephant with the head of a sheep by Saint Durvāśa who was disturbed at the time of his Tapas. Varuṇā's son came here to worship the Liṅgam Ajagajēśwarar and obtained salvation. As the son once made a Liṅgam from a sapphire and worshipped it, the place attained the name of Ādiratṇēswarem. As per the purāṇa there are 12 names to this temple. The temple which was sung by Tirugnāṇasambandar was founded by Pāṇṭiya kings and renovated by RM. AR. R. M. Chettiar's family of Devakottai. At that time the old structure as well as the inscriptions were obliterated.

28. Thītāṇḍatāṇam: Thīrtam - āḍum - sthāṇam, means the place where one can take holy bath. As per the local legend one Paṇṭita Chola who was suffering from leprosy worshipped the God after taking a holy bath in the nearby sea and was cured. Hence



this place came to be known as Tittāṇḍatāṇam and the Liṅgam as Sarvo-Thīrtha-mudayār. Pilgrims frequently arrive here on New moon days, Amāvāśya, Aṣṭhami and other important days. In Krethāyuga the God was called Pasupatiśwarar and the village Ravi-puram, because the Sun God worshipped the Liṅga. In Trētāyuga the God was named as Virutapuriśwarar and the village was named Virudhapuram on account of Vasishṭha, who worshipped the God. Brahma worshipped in the Dvāparayuga, hence the God and Village were named as Brahmapuriwarar and Brahmapuram. In this Kaliyuga they are known as Sarvatīrtamuḍayār and Tīrtam-āḍum-sthāṇam as we know already.

29. Tiruvēgampattu: There is an ancient Pāṇṭiyā Śiva temple dedicated to Ekāmbarēs'warar and snēkavalli. Though there is no purāṇic connection with this temple, it is remarkable for the structure, pillars and small statues of dancing poses.<sup>39</sup>

30. Tiruuttrakos'amaṅgai: This is an important temple in the Ramanathapuram Dt. Saint Māṇickavāsakar sang poems in praise of it. It has a beautiful Nataraja statue. The area of the Mangalanataswamy temple is 15 acres and the height of the gopuram is 124 ft. A separate tiny temple in the form of a temple car has been built for God Nataraja. We can see the temple architecture of the period of Cholanadu Kondaruliya Sundarapāṇṭiyaṇ. The words of Māṇickavāsakar "Maṅkai munthiyō maṇ munthiyō" point out the antiquity of this village.<sup>40</sup> Some historians say that this is the birth place of the mother of Pararājasīngam, the Ceylonese king. Māṇickavāsakar attained "Aṭṭamāsiddhi" here.

31. Tondi: Tondi is situated on the shore of Bay of Palk, 10 k.m. east of Tiruvāṭṭāṇai. Once the famous trunk road between Benares and Rāmēs'waram passed through this place. According to an inscription on the walls of the Sri Chidambaranatar temple, eye copied by me 41 in 1971 Tondi was called Poutramāṇickapaṭṭiṇam. The temple was constructed by Sundarapāṇṭiya.

#### VAISHNAVA TEMPLES :

Vaishnavism also played an important role in the religious

history of Tamil Nadu. Saint Periālwār and his daughter Āṇḍāl were born in Srivilliputtur. Sri Manavālamāmuni born in Kontakai. Ramanuja, the great savant came forward to sacrifice his life for the benefit of the ordinary people. Four out of the 108 sacred Vaishnava temples ( 108 Divya-kshētiraṅkaḷ ) are in this District.

1. Aḷagarkoyil : The name Aḷagarkoyil will make one to think about Aḷagarkoyil, near Madurai. But this Aḷagarkoyil is at the top of the hill about 200ft. height, called Maṇḍūga, or Tirumantiramalai near Srivilliputtur. At the foot of the hill there is a cool and clear stream called Maṇḍūga river or Nūpura Gangai. According to the legend Durvās'a came to meet Sudabhar, who was chanting mantras at Varaha kshetra. Durvās'a cursed Sudabhar to become a frog as he delayed a lot to receive Durvās'a. The frog, Maṇḍūga came here to worship Aḷagar in this place in order to get rid of the curse. He constructed the Kāṭṭaḷagar temple also known as Sundararajar.

2. Ariakkudṇy : Ariakkudṇy is a corruption of Harikudṇy famous for a Perumal temple called "South Tirupati". One Sevugan Cheṭṭiar, a pious devotee of Lord Venkatēs'aperumal of Tirupati, who used to offer his annual savings at Tirupati lived in this village. One night Lord Venkatēs'apērumal appeared in the Cheṭṭiar's dream and directed him to build a temple at this place and worship him. He did so. The special feature of this temple is Garuda. It is worshipped with great veneration <sup>42</sup>

3. Ilayatankudṇy : Here is an old Perumal temple at this place. There are numerous inscriptions in this ruined temple. Some of the 13th century inscriptions speak about Kaḷavaḷi-nāḍāḷwāṇ. <sup>43</sup>

4. Ilayankudṇy : There is a Vaishṇava temple dedicated to Sri Vēnugopālaswāmy. A fragmentary inscription calls the Perumal 'Vīrachola viṇṇagar emperumāṇ.' There is an interesting inscription in this temple dated 1303 A.D. Vāṇādirājan Kalingarāyan son of Gangaikoṇḍa Sūryadevan, a subordinate

of Māravarman Kulasēkara i constructed many temples and Maṭhas, established many Agraharas and made endowments for various religious services at different holy places throughout Tamil Nadu.<sup>44</sup>

5. Kīḷkiḍāram : This village was named after Burma on account of trade connection with it. This is the birth place of the mother of Vaishṇava saint Maṇavāḷapperumāḷ. He has been immortalised by a stone image in the Sri Sundararaja Perumal temple at Kotaṅkuḷam an adjacent village.

6. Kontakai : This is the native place of Sri Maṇavāḷamāmunivar, a famous Vaishṇava Ācharya. The name of the God is Devarājaperumāḷ and Sri Varamaṅgai. This place is named after Kundi devi, mother of the Pancha Pāṇḍavars.

7. Manamadurai : One Māvali Vāṇādirāyan used to go to Aḷagar koyil daily. Due to heavy rain one day he was not able to go there. On that day he had a vision that he should construct a Vishṇu temple and worship. So he built this temple here. The image in the sanctum is 6ft. height and Hanuman is 8ft. in height. He is very graceful and attractive with a crown. The Alagar temple is the replica of the Aḷagar koyil and the festivals are celebrated following Aḷagar koyil. There is also another Vishṇu temple called Appanperumāḷ.

8. Sriviḷḷiputtūr : Sriviḷḷiputtūr is the birth place of Sri Periaḷwār and Āṇḍāḷ. This place is also known as Nacciārkoyil referring to Āṇḍāḷ. Godhapuri and Sridhanusupura are also the names of this place. It is also one of the 108 sacred Vaishṇava temples (Divyakshēttiraṅkaḷ). There are two temples within a big compound. One is Nacciarkoyil and the other is Vadapatrasāi-koyil. Between them there is a flower garden, which is considered to be the place where Āṇḍāḷ was born. The Āṇḍāḷ temple is said to have been built in 788 A.D. and renovated in the 15th century A.D. by Māvali Vāṇādi rāyan, one of the Bāṇa kings.

Vaṭapatrasāi temple consists of two floors. The ground floor is occupied by Sri Narasiṅga and in the first floor we can worship Perumal in the lying posture. There is a tall tower in front of the temple, a unique specimen of the hollow gopura.

There is a separate temple for Lord Krishṇa which was built by Krishṇappa Nāyakkar, son of Vīrappa Nāyakkar of Madurai Nāyak dynasty towards the end of 16th century.

At a maṇḍapa we can envisage beautiful statues of Gods and Kings. The massive car of the temple was made by Vānamāmalai jeer Swamigal during the Kollam year 1025 (1825 A.D.). There is no temple car superior to this in Tamil Nadu. The Brahmotsavam is celebrated during the month of Ādi. Tiru Mukkulam is the tank in which Sri Āṇḍāl observed Mārgaḷi festival. The tank was supposed to have got water from Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati.<sup>45</sup>

9. Tirkkoshṭiyūr: The Vishṇu temple now called Sri Sowmya Nārāyaṇapperumāḷ, is the most imposing temple. It is one of the 108 sacred Vaishnava temples and sung by Pēyālwar, Būtattattālwar, Periālwar, Tirumalīsaīālwar and Tirumaṅgaiālwar. Most important part of the temple is the Ashṭhānga Vimānam with the height of 96ft. and its shadow never falls on the ground like that of Tanjavur. The upper storey eight of the aṅga-vimāna can be seen in different directions representing the eight words of the sacred mantras. At the first floor we can worship Sri Tiruppār kadal nātar in a lying posture. In the middle floor Niṇṇa Nārāyaṇa with Sridevi and Būdevi give us darsanam. The top most storey is occupied by Parama pada Nātar with Sridevi and Būdevi, representing Vaikuṇḍam.

The Śiva temple which is found at the entrance was taken from Aḷagamāneri and installed here.<sup>46</sup> Śiva, Vishṇu, Brahma and Indra met at this place in a group to find out a way to kill Hiraṇya. Hence this place is called Tiru-Koshṭhi-Ūr.

The celebrated Vaishṇava Ācharya Sri Ramanuja came to this place to study the secrets of the Mantra from Tirukoshṭhi-yūrnambi. Against the promise given to the Guru, he propagated the secret Mantra for the salvation of the masses of all the castes. When he was questioned by Nambi, Ramanuja replied that he would rather go to hell, while thousands of people benefited.<sup>47</sup>

The Joshiyar Teppakkuḷam, in front of the temple was dug by the Pradhani of Raja Sriranga who was also an as-

trologer. There are two cars for the temple and Teppotsavam takes place every year here.

10. Tiruppullāṇi: Tiruppullāṇi is derived from Tiru-pul-aṇai, which means Dharbasayanam in Sanskrit. On his way to Lanka Sri Rama used Dharbai for bed in this place. So this place got this name. There is also another story. One sage by name Pulli did penance and attained blessings of Lord Perumal. Hence this place is called by this name. This place has also got the names of Tiruvaṇai, Pullāraṇyam and Ādisethu. Sri ĀdiJagannāta and Padmāsani are the names of the deities of this temple. Traditionally pilgrims visit this place after visiting Ramēswaram.

Ādisetu, the bathing place is very near to this village and esteemed as Dhanushkoṭi, where Rama bathed here on his expedition to Lanka. The temple was visited by Tirumaṅgai Ālwār. This temple is endowed by Setupatis and Marudus. Some inscriptions call the God Deivaccilaiyār. In 1778 a certain Ananthālwār constructed many maṇḍapas in the temple. They are Bhattar piḷḷai vilasa, Jagannata vilasa, Irantakālam eṭutha Sundara toḷudaiyān Mavali Vanādirāyar, the Bana chief had instituted a special Sandi in his name in 1515 A.D.<sup>48</sup>

11. Tirutaṅkāl: From the Sangam age the village is called Tirutaṅ-kāl. But the puranic scholars explain this term as Tiru-taṅkal and tell a story that Tirupati Nārāyaṇar was proceeding to Sri Āṇḍāl and at night the Lord halted here. Hence this place is called Tiru-taṅkal. The temple is dedicated to Niṇra Perumāḷ and Seṅgamala Nāchiar. There is a rock-cut temple for Anandasāyī. On the other side of the temple there is a Siva temple for Karuneḷḷinātaswamy. Lakshmi, Prurava performed tapas here. Devendra Vallabha, a pāṇṭiya king tried to kill a tiger when he went for a hunt. When it came here it transformed itself into Duruva, the saint. So it was called Pulippārai. According to the inscriptions available from this temple, Kurukulatarayan a minister to Sundarapāṇṭiya, built a garbhagṛha, Ardhamāṇḍapa and Mahāmāṇḍapa, of the Viṣṇu temple in 1227 A.D. and built the Siva temple for Karuneḷḷinātar in 1233 A.D.

Two sons of some Tiruvaraṅgadevan erected a maṇḍapa with a shrine of Narasingadeva called Tiruveṅkaṭavan maṇḍapam and gifted lands for reading Ramayana, Mahabharatha and Purāṇās in the matha io 1220 A.D., in the reign of Maravarman Kulasekarapāṇṭiya.<sup>49</sup>

12. Tiruvaṇṇamalai: Tiruvannamalai was formerly known as Tirumalai, which means sacred hill. Folk lores tell us that Lord Tirupati Venkatacalapati came for a hunt in order to marry Āṇḍāl and bless His devotee. We can reach the temple with the help of the stone steps flanked at intervals by lesser shrines and Maṇḍapas. Pilgrims take bath at the Konēri tāmari tirtam before climbing up the hill, which is at the bottom of the hill. Thousands of people came and worship the deity every Saturday. The 3rd Saturday of Puraṭṭāsi is considered the most important sacred day as on that day Sri Āṇḍāl is taken from Sriviḷḷiputtūr to this place.

So far we have analysed some important Vaishṇava temples which have purāṇic importance. and sung by Āḷwārs. In the Nayakar period they have built new temples, renovated the old and erected massive towers at the entrance of the temples. Particularly most of the Krishṇa temples throughout the Pāṇṭiya country are their contribution to temple expansion. Some Vaishṇava temples are noted for their art and inscriptions, though they belong to various periods of pāṇṭiya, Chola, Nayakkar and Vanādirāyars.

## SAKTI TEMPLES

The mother cult which was prevalent throughout the whole world was considered to be the earliest one. The ancient people thought the Earth as a mother based on fertility theory. Earth (female) and Sun male have been the oldest of Gods, not entirely given up. In Ṛigveda she was worshipped in the name of "Vācdevī". The hereditary Gods of many families and village Gods are in feminine gender. Though there are many Sakti temples we shall consider a few which are very famous<sup>50</sup>.

1. Irukkaṅkuḍi: Irukkaṅkudi, once called Iruppaikuḍi is famous for Māriamman, a powerful Goddess in the Sathur Tk. It attracts thousands of people from many parts of Madurai,

Rāmanathapuram and Tirunelveli Dts. The rivers Vaipar and Arjuna join in front of the Māriamman temple. During every Friday a large crowd of people gather here for worship. In the months of Tai and Ādi, temple attracts lakhs of people from many parts of Southern districts. Iruppaikuḍi Kīḷavan of this place was an important person who dug the great Kīḷavan eri in the history of early Pāñṭiyas.<sup>51</sup>

2. Kandaevi: Kandaevi is very near to Devakoṭṭai. There are two legends about this temple. The Rishis who were distributed by Sundāsuran prayed the Goddess Parvati and protection. According to the Kālayār Koyil sthalapuranam Lord Kaliswarar gave darsanam when Umadevi was doing tapas as Kāḷi.

3. Kaṇṇamaṅgalapaṭṭi: Kaṇṇamaṅgalam is situated 5k.m. south of Singampuneri in Tirupattur Tk. Though now it is a very small village with a handful of population, it was the headquarters and chief town of Dwārāpativēlān. The presiding village Goddess Paṭṭatarasi amman was installed and worshipped in the period of Kulothunga Chola I by Dwārāpativēlān, a chieftain in this area. Panguṇi Pongal is celebrated every year. It belongs to the Vāḷilār community who are residing in small villages near the temple.<sup>52</sup>

4. Kārāikuḍy: Kōppuḍaiyanāyakiamman temple is a very important one which occupies a busy junction where three roads meet. The Nāṭṭukoṭṭai cheṭṭiars endowed jewels and lands to this temple and so it is a wealthy temple. Every day a large number of people come here to worship the Goddess. The 'Pūccorital' festival is a remarkable festival.

One Sivaganga king discovered a statue with ear ornaments called "koppu" and installed it at "Sencai" a part of Karaikkudi. In a troublesome period, he put the statue in a hole of a tree and died. After some years the Goddess indicated her hidden place in the dream of a woman and the temple was established here.<sup>53</sup>

5. Kollaṅkudi: Kollaṅkudi near Sivaganga is famous for Veṭṭudai Kāḷi amman. Kārivēlar and Karuppuvēlar the brothers,

who were great magicians established this temple. This is a practice of the people of this area to cut the coins, praying to the Goddess to punish their enemies who were unjust and wicked.

6. Muhavūr : This place is very near from Rajapalayam. Sri Māriamman temple is a very popular one in this area. People believe that the deity was identified by a lady, when she was cutting the grass with a spade. Suddenly she was surprised to notice the oozing of blood from a particular place. She removed the sand and found that Amman. From that day onwards people began to worship Her. Pūja is performed daily with the help of the money given by the Nāḍār Mahamai fund committee. Pura-ṭṭāsi Poṅgal and Paṅguṇi poṅgal are very famous. Akkinicaṭṭi and Āyiram kaṇ Pāṇai are taken in procession by the men and women respectively. Pious Hindus walk on the burning "taṇal" of about 2 ft. height and prove the greatness of the Amman.<sup>54</sup>

7. Nāṭṭarasankottai: It is one of the important places occupied by the people of Nāṭṭukottai cheṭṭiar community. The Kaṇṇudaiyanāyaki temple is considered that of Kaṇṇaki by some people of this area. It is one of the Ashthakāli temple. As the people pray to the Goddess to cure the eye disease. she is called kaṇ-uṭaya-nāyaki. Though every Tuesdays and Fridays are considered holy days, the Vaikasi festival is unequalled in this area.

8. Rāmanāthapuram : The gold idol of Sri Rājarājes'wari installed in the palace at Rāmanāthapuram is said to have been given by Tirumalai Nayakkar. This deity was formerly known as Durga and the pūja was performed with animal sacrifice. Baskara setupati requested Sankaracharya of Sringeri to subdue the ferocious (ugra) aspect of Mahākāḷi Durga. Accordingly a Sri Chakra was installed and the Vaidika pūja was introduced in the temple of Sri Rājarājes'wari.<sup>55</sup>

9. Tiruverriyūr: Tiruverriyūr pakampiriyaḷ temple is a very famous one in this area, which attracts thousands of people, every Sunday, who were bitten by poisonous insects, such as snakes, scorpions etc. Though it is a Siva temple of Lord Vānmikanāta, locally it is called pakampiriyaḷ koyil. Those who are bitten by poisonous reptiles come here and stay for



some days. They use the Vāsuki tīrtam which is a tank in front of the temple and neem leaves. Annual festivals are held in Chittirai for ten days.

10. Virudunagar: Virudunagar Māriamman temple is one of the most important temples in this area. Devotees from many parts of Tamil Nadu, particularly of Nādar community assemble here for paṅguṇi poṅgal festival. Thousands of devotees both men and women including children in yellow garments come in a procession with a pot containing fire. An exhibition also is held at this time.

#### VINAYAKAR TEMPLES:

It is very important to mention the Vinayakar temples in this paper because he is called the First God (Mudar kaṭavuḷ). Indians both Hindus and Buddhists worshipped him and believed that nothing should be begun without praying to Gaṇēsa. I think it is not a mistake to mention here the story how He tested His own father too. Once Siva started a war with Asurās without worshipping Vinayakar. Vinayakar broke the axle of the car and showed his importance and ability.

1. Piḷḷayārpatti: Piḷḷayārpatti is a calm, small village situated between Kāraikudi and Tiruppattūr. It could be reached easily from these two places, where a rock-cut temple of early pāṇṭiyās is situated. Scholars like Dr. A.V. Jeyechandrun say that it is the earliest rock-cut temple in Tamil Nadu and belongs to pre-pallava times.<sup>56</sup> A Brahmi inscription of late 5th century A. D. confirms this theory. The image of Vināyakar has some special features to be noted here. He has only two arms excluding "Tuttikkai". There is no yagnopavīta. The right tusk is not broken and the trunk is turned to the right side. In one hand he holds something which could not be identified well. As scholars think it may be a mōdaka, or a Lingā or a pot of water or a cintāmani. In stone records he is called "Desivinayakar" instead of "Karpakavinayakar" of this age. Liṅgothbhava, Harihara and Liṅga with square pīṭhā are also cut in the rock. There is a Siva temple called Marudis'waram of the 20th century. Piḷḷaiyār Caturti is a very important festival in this temple.<sup>57</sup>

2. Uppūr : In Sanskrit it is called Lavanapuram. It is said that it was built by some Viman who got a son by the grace of the God Vināyakar. As he was placed in an open space once, he is called Veyyil-Ukantha-Vināyakar, Rama on his way to Lanka worshipped this Gaṇēsa. As the temple is situated on the high way to Rameswaram the pilgrims used to worship the God enroute.

#### MURUKAN TEMPLES :

Lord Muruka is considered to be the God of Tamils. In Vaikāsi Visākam and Taipūsam we can see many kāvāṭies Pāl-kuḍams on the roads leading to the nearest Murukan Temples. It is a common feature that if there are Tamils there will be a Murukan temple also.

1. Kuṇṇakkūḍi : Kuṇṇakkūḍi alias Kuṇṇakuḍi is a small village with a hill on which the Murukan temple is erected. This place is known as Mayūragiri, Mayilmalai, Arasa-vaṇam and Krishṇānagaram. At the top Lord Muruka is enshrined with six faces, on his celestial vahana, peacock, with his consorts Vaḷḷi and Deivayāṇai. At the bottom there is a rock-cut temple.

According to the sthalapurāṇa Sūran induced the peacock to swallow the Garuda and swan, telling a lie that they talked ill of peacock. Viṣṇu and Brahma reported this news to Muruka. He ordered the peacock to become a hillock. The peacock did penance and got its original form from leaving the hillock in its shape in testimony of this event.

Visākam, Skandasashṭhy, Krittikai, Pusam and Uttaram are important festivals. This is one of the Anjukoyil Devasthanam of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai Āthīnam.

2. Melkodumalūr : Melkodumalūr is situated 8 k.m. away from Abiramam in Mudukulattūr Tk. Here is an old Subrahmaṇīya temple which attracts thousands of people in Paṇḍuṇi Utram and Vaikāsi Visākam. Lord Muruka came to this place in the form of an old Brahmin. The saints of this place cooked meals and came to serve him the food. But they could not meet him as he had transformed into a stone image under a Udai. tree. You cannot see anywhere such a majestic and heroic statue.

At the foot of the statue is the slained head of Bānugopan, the Asura.

Another legend says that this is the place where Pārvati, gave the 'Maḷu', the iron weapon to Muruka to slay Bānugōpan. Originally this place was called Uttamapāṇṭiyanallur and the Siva Kumīli swarar was also called Uttamapāṇṭiye-swaramuṭaiyār. Except these, there are many Murukan temples which were visited and sung by Saint Arunagirinātar.

#### JAIN AND BUDDHIST TEMPLES :

There is only one Jain temple in the District and that is at Haṇumantakudṛ very near to Dēvakoṭṭai. It was called "Jiṇāntaramaṅgalam". Shrines of Eyakky, Gomatiswarar are here. There is only one Jain family living near the temple.

In Iḷyaṅkudṛ there is a big statue of a Tirtankar outside the Siva temple. Local people particularly members of the Mancaputur cheṭṭiar community worship it every Thursday. Pirāṇmalai, Tirukōḷakudṛ, Paḷḷimaḍam, Kurandai, Kovilankulam and Maṇalūr were also considered as Jain centres. We can see many statues of Tirthankaras in various parts in the district.<sup>58</sup>

At present there exist no Buddha temples. But we can see the statues of Buddha at Bagavathimaṅgalam and Ammaṇanallur.<sup>59</sup>

#### SOME IMPORTANT TEMPLES OF HISTORIC VALUES :

In this chapter I am going to explain some temples which have historical, inscriptional records and iconographic value too. Side by side: I shall, give some description about the local deities like Karuppasamy, Aiyāṇār and some Goddesses too. From the hymns of Appar and Sambantar we can understand that Pāsupati cult was prevalent in Tamil country before 60 7th century, They worshipped the God Bhairavar. Vairavan-patti, Pirāṇmalai, Tirupattūr, Periccikoyil and Iḷuppakudṛ are famous for Bhairava "Saṅṅati".

1. Araṇmaṇi Siruvayal : This place is usually called by the people A Siruvayal. The ancient Siva temple is dedicated to Mummuṭinātar and Karuṇākataḱshi. The three Tamil kings

Cera, Chola and Pāṇṭiya are said to have visited this place and the tanks were also dug by them. So the God Śiva is called Mummuṭinātar. But according to the inscriptions found here, the temple was called Mummuṭicolīswaram. So this temple would have been built at the time of Mummuṭicolan, Rajaraja I.

A lady set up the images of Āruḍaya Nāchiar and his consort around 1275 A.D. Kānappēruḍiān Māḷava Cakravarti, a chief under Māravarman Sundara Pāṇṭiya gifted lands as Gurudakshina to Kavirāyar Iswarasiva of Sāndilya Gotra, a native of Udradesa in 1235 A.D. Two merchants from Arivayur and another from Aḷagāpuri built a Subramania temple and constructed the image of Iḷayanāyaṇār.

2. Aruppukoṭṭai: There is an ancient śiva temple which is said to have been built by Sundarapāṇṭiya with a number of inscriptions. One of them says about Viravaḷanjears of Ilam. They set up the image of Arumtava Chita Nachiar and the place was called Senkai thurukkai Idattuvaḷi. (407 to 1915). Festivals are held in Vaikāsi and Āṇi. Here are temples of Muthumāriamman, Vāḷavantaamman, Venkatesaperumal and Amutaliṅgēswarar.

3. Devakoṭṭai: This is one of the important towns of the people of Nāṭṭukoṭṭai Nagarattār Community. There are many modern temples beautifully built by cheṭṭiars. There are temples of Śiva, Viṣṇu, Vinayakar, Māriamman and Karuppaswamy. Ashṭhami Pradakshinam is an important festival when all the principal deities from Nagara Sivan temples are taken procession through the important streets of Dēvakoṭṭai. Skandasashthi and Tiagaraja Brahmotsavam are also celebrated on a grand scale when all the important musicians of South India participate.

4. Dhanuskōḍi: This is a famous bathing centre and considered sacred Sagara Saṅgama. Hindus believe that the sins will be washed away if one takes bath here. The greatness of this bathing ghat is mentioned in many Sanskrit and Tamil works. This place was destroyed by a cyclone in 1964.

5. Iḷayātankuḍy : Iḷayātankuḍy Karuppar is a family God to one section of Naṭṭukoṭṭai cheṭṭiars. The God is called Maḷaiyāla Karuppar. A beautiful temple is also built for the God. Some devotees of cheṭṭiar community who are doing business in Malaysia are sending their offerings to this God. The members of the family who have connection with this temple will commence their projects only after worshipping this Karuppar.

6. Kaḷḷankuḍy : Kaḷḷankuḍy is a small village existing from 13th century. The name of the God is Tirupaṭṭiswaramudaiyār. The Goddess is called Bālāmbāl. In the 13th century this place was called Tiruchiṙrambalanallur situated in Pāḷayūrnādu. A maṇḍapa was built in the reign of Kulasekara (1300 A. D.).<sup>61</sup>

7. Kappalūr : Kappalūr was a famous place in 12-13th century A.D. in the Pāṇṭiya history. It was under the control of Kappalur Karyamāṇickam. His name is found in many inscriptions throughout the Tamil country. He was the signatory in many inscriptions and a remarkable donor too. Nowadays, the Perumal is called Narasiṅgaperumaḷ, though there is no statue of Narasingar, but the Perumal is in standing posture with Ṣridēvi and Būdevi.

8. Kiḷakkarai : There is an ancient dilapidated Siva temple dedicated to Chokanātaswamy built by Varaguna Pāṇṭiya in the 9th century. This place was called “Niṇaittathai Muṭitta vināyakappaṭṭiṇam” and “Aṇuttokai maṅgalam”. In the period of Accuta Rāya and Timmusu Nāyakkar gifts were given to the temples. There are temples dedicated to Piḷḷaiyār, Subrahmaṇyar, Ugravīra, Mākāḷiammaṇ and Māriamman.

9. Nemam : Nemam is a corruption of Niyamam. The chieftain of this place is spoken in many inscriptions of the 13th century as Niyamanātan. There is a Siva temple dedicated to Jayamkoṇḍa Cholēsvara and Soundara Nāyaki, filled with most beautiful sculptures which are beyond comparison. Eight Vīraṭṭa Murthis and their consorts are all cut out of a single blocks of stone with great skill.

10. Paṭṭamaṅgalam : Paṭṭamaṅgalam is a very small village near Tirupattur. Māṇickavāsakar too mentions this place in his songs as

“Paṭṭa maṅgalattil pāṅgāyiruntaṅku  
aṭṭamā citti aruḷiya atuvum”

This is the place where God showed his attamāsitti. Under a big banyan tree, there is a temple for Dakṣiṇāmūṛthy, people call him Aṭṭamāsittar. At the time of Ādīammāvāsai, a large crowd assembles here to celebrate the Tithi of their expired parents and ancescours.<sup>62</sup>

11 Periccikoyil : The ancient name of this village were Mēn Marudūr and Jayamkoṇḍa Coḷanallur. The Kshetrapala of 11th century is still under worship in this temple. Some people say that the icon of Bhairava would have been made with poisonous herbs. Maḷuva Māṇickam of Punkunra nāḍu, Kandan Udayān Chittan Gāṅkāyan, poet Karani Villupparāyar, Gurukulattarayan and Niyamanatan are mentioned in the inscriptions of this place. Tirunāvukkarasu Tirumaḍam and Virapāṇṭṭiyan Tirumaḍam were active in 13th century.

12. Rajasiṅgamaṅgalam : According to the local tradition the village was named after Rajasimna, a Pallava king. But there is no evidence to prove the connection with the Pallava. There are two temples one for Kailāsanātaswamy built by Varaguna I and another for Kariamāṇickaperumal. There are inscriptions of 13th century.

13. Seithūr : Seithur was the capital of Seithur zamins and called in ancient days Semmaram and Kulasekharapuram in Ānmānādu. The name of the God is Sulochana Iswaramudaiyār who was called in inscriptions as Kaṇṇuḍaiya Iswaramuḍaiyār and Dhṛitīswarar in Sanskrit. The shrine of the Goddess is Soundaranāyaki, called in the inscriptions as Kāmakotṭamuḍaiya Aḷagia Nācciar, was built by Sāthan Itavi of Kiḷkuḷan in Malaimaṇḍalam. It was endowed by the zamindars of Seithur. They arranged many festivals. The Paṅguṇittiruviḷā is remarkable even today.

Besides this there is a Vishṇu temple of Sṛṇivāsaperumaḷ which was called in ancient days as Sarvanārāyana Vinṇṇakar Āḷwar, built by Virathamudithan Perumaḷ in 12th century in the reign of Jaṭāvarma Kulasekhara.

14. Sivapuripatti: Sivapuripatti is on the Northern bank of the river Pālār near Singampuneri. Inscriptionally it is a most important village in the History of Tamilnadu. There are inscriptions from 1172 A.D. to 20th century. One who reads the inscriptions can understand the paleography of the Tamil letters. There are inscriptions dealing with Aruviyūr Nagarttar, Dwarapati velār and Vāḷillār, a peculiar caste seen only in this area. The statues of Saptamatrika are remarkable and they were photographed and printed by the French Institute of Indology. The names of the God and Goddess are Svayam-prakāsa and Dharmasamvardhim.

15. Singampuneri: Singappidāri changed as Singampuneri in due course. There is a Durgadevi with her vehicle lion in the Sevugaperumaḷ. Iyyanar temple. This Iyyanar is worshipped by the people around this place also. We can meet many persons in this area named Sēvugan, Sēvugaratnam and Sēvugaperumaḷ. People offer bulls to this place as “nērttikkaḍaṇ” (offering) to this temple. Hundreds of such bulls belong to this temple. They are utilized for ‘manjuviraṭṭu’. There is also one siddhar temple called Vāthiārāyā koyil alias Muttuvaṭukaiyā temple. This is the only place where a festival is celebrated in the name of Siddhars.

16. Sivaganga: As a Linga submerged in the Ganga water of the tank before the palace, it is named Sivaganga. The sanskrit name of this place is Dakṣiṇa-Kāḷi-puram, Marudu Brothers built Tirugnāna Subramaṇia temple. One Lakshmi-ammal, a pious poor Brahmin widow installed a Liṅgā which was brought by her from Banaras. Now the temple is called Sri Viswanatar temple.

17. Vairavṇpatti: One who travels from Karaikudy to Madurai cannot miss to see the tower of the temple at Vairavṇpatti, which is situated on the Northern side of the

road after crossing Piḷḷaiyārpaṭṭi. Bhairava is housed in a beautifully constructed temple of polished black granite, between Vāḷiswarar and Vadivudaiamman. Bhairava was born in this place to kill the giants Mailāsuraṅ and Māṇickaasuraṅ. A dilapidated vaṭṭeḷuttu inscription of 11th century character mentions Tirumayāna devar and seems to register some provision made for food offerings and a lamp.<sup>64</sup>

18. Vēlanguḍy: This village is called S. Velankudy, i.e. Sundzikādu Vēlanguḍy. In ancient times it was called Vēlanguḍy in Pūṅkuṇṇanādu. This village played a important part in the history of Pāṇṭiyas and Nāṭṭukoṭṭai cheṭṭiars. So the temple served as a record office. The God is called Rutrakōṭṭiswarar. There is a Karupparkoyil of village God which is the family God of the people of this area under a grove of trees.

19. V. Sūraikkuḍi : V. Sūraikkuḍy means Vēlanguḍy sūraikkuḍy. But the local people call it Vaṇṇian Sūraikkuḍy. There is no connection with S. Valankudy which is discussed in this paper. This was the head quarters of Vijayālaya Thevar of Sūraikkuḍy. His dynasty ruled from 14 to 17th century. Vijayala-thēvan is the first person who reconstructed the Tiruthoḷinātar temple at Tiruppattur which was destroyed by Muslims in the 13th century. He constructed the Meenakshi Sundereswarar temple here and gifted lands for maintenance. But the legend tells that one Pāṇṭiya king used to go to Madurai daily to worship the God there. One day a heavy rain prevented him. The God said in his dream to build a temple and worship him in this place. The Sun God is said to have worshipped him here. But the temple which was built for him is not found anywhere. There is an old ilantai tree which is considered the sthala vriksha.<sup>65</sup>

## NEWLY FOUND OUT ANCIENT TEMPLES

At the time of my field study I noticed some dilapidated and ruined temples with beautiful images and rare inscriptions. Now I shall give some one or two in this paper for information sake.

1. Īnjār: Īnjār is situated 3 k.m. left on the main road leading from Srivilliputhur to Sivakāsi in Sivakāsi Tk. and 6 k.m. west of Sivakāsi town. The temple was built by "Mallināṭṭu



taḍaṅkaṇṇi ciṟṟūruṭaiyāṇ colan uyya vandāṇāṇa gurukula taraiyaṇ” in the period of Māravarman Sundarapāṇṭiyan according to one inscription at this temple. There are three inscriptions. Now the deities are called Mīnakshi Sundareswarar and Mīnakshi. The garbhagṛha is in a dilapidated condition. The Mahāmaṇḍapa is used by the people.<sup>66</sup>

2. Cheṭṭikuruchi: It is in Singampuneri panchayat Union in Tiruppatur Tk. The temple is fully ruined. The basement (Adish-ṭhāṇa) only remains with only one inscription which calls this place as Eṟipaḍainallūr. The decayed inscription calls this place “Tuvarāpati nāṭṭu eṟipaḍainallūr”. Eṟipaḍainallūr is a merchantile city marked in Suriapaṭṭi and Pirāṇmalai inscriptions.<sup>67</sup>

3. Arunūṟṟimaṅgalam: Arunūṟṟimaṅgalam is a small village in Tiruvādānai Tk. mostly inhabited by Arumbākkurra Veḷḷālar. But they do not know where was Arumbākkurram. From an inscription in the Agasthīswarar temple in this village, the Arumbākkurram was called Arum-porkurram. This Arunūṟṟimaṅgalam was also in that Kūṟram.<sup>68</sup>

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# இராமர் கோயில்களும் கல்வெட்டுச் செய்திகளும்

என். சேதுராமன்

திருமாலின் பத்து அவதாரங்களுள் இராமவதாரம் ஒன்றாகும். இராமனைப் பல நூற்றாண்டுகளுக்கு முன்பிருந்தே — பாரதம் முழுவதும் மக்கள் வணங்கி வருகின்றனர். இராமாயண கதை அறியாதவர் எவரும் இல்லை. இராமாயணம் எல்லா மொழிகளிலும் எழுதப்பட்டுள்ளது. பாரதம் எங்கும் இராமனுக்குக் கோயில்கள் கட்டப்பட்டன. தமிழ் நாட்டிலும் புராதன காலந்தொட்டு இராமனுக்குக் கோயில்கள் இருந்து வருகின்றன. திரு அயோத்தி ஆள்வார், ராகவச் சக்கரவர்த்தி, கருணாகரன், ராமதேவப் பெருமான், சக்கரவர்த்தித் திருமகனார் என்று பல வகையாலும் தமிழ் நாட்டிலுள்ள இராமர் கோயில்கள் அழைக்கப்பட்டன. அக்கோயில்கள் சிலவற்றையும் அவை தொடர்பான சில கல்வெட்டுச் செய்திகளையும் இக்கட்டுரையில் காண்போம்.

திருநெல்வேலி மாவட்டம் — நான்குநேரி தாலுக்கா — விஜய நாராயணத்து மனோன்மணீஸ்வரத்து கோயிலில் உள்ள ஒரு கல்வெட்டு மாறஞ்சடையனின் இரண்டாம் ஆண்டுக்குரியது. இம்மன்னன் கி.பி. 863-இல் முடிசூடிய இரண்டாம் வரகுணனாக இருக்கலாம். இக்கல்வெட்டில் இக்கோயிலுக்கு உரிய நிலங்களின் எல்லைகளைக் குறிப்பிடும்போது, ஸ்ரீராகவப்பெருமானுக்கு வைத்த பத்து மா நிலமும் கூறப்படுகிறது. கி. பி. 864-க்கு முன்பே இவ்வூரில் இராமர் கோயில் இருந்துள்ளது.<sup>1</sup>

புள்ளலூர்

காஞ்சீபுரம் தாலுக்கா — புள்ளலூர் கைலாசநாதர் கோயிலின் உள்ள காமாட்சி அம்மன் கோயிலின் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் அவ்வூரில் இருந்த இராமர் கோயிலுக்கு உரியன. இராமர் கோயில் அழிந்து விடவே, கல்வெட்டுக்களுடன் கூடிய அக்கோயிலின் இடிபாடுகளைக் கொண்டு காமாட்சி அம்மன் கோயிலைப் பிற்காலத்தில் கட்டினார். இனி, கல்வெட்டுக்கள் கூறும் செய்திகளைப் பார்ப்போம்.

முதல் பராந்தக சோழனின் 34-ஆம் ஆண்டுக் கல்வெட்டே (941) மிகப் பழமையானது. எயிற் கோட்டத்துப் புள்வேளூரில் — திரு அயோத்தி நின்று அருளுகின்ற ஸ்ரீராவகப் பெருமானுக்கு நுந்தா விளக்கு எரிக்க — மன்னனின் அரசியார் சீயபுவன சுந்தரமணியார் பத்துக்கழஞ்சு பொன் தானமாகக் கொடுத்தாள் என்று கூறுகிறது. இராமன் இருக்குமிடம் அயோத்தி என்பர். புள்வேளூரில் இராமன் இருந்தாலும் அவன் இருக்குமிடம் அயோத்தி என்ற முறையில்— திருஅயோத்திநின்று அருளுகின்ற ஸ்ரீராகவன் என்று கல்வெட்டும் பகர்கின்றது.<sup>2</sup>

இரண்டாம் இராசேந்திர தேவனது 9-ஆம் ஆண்டுக் கல்வெட்டு (1061) திருஅயோத்திப் பெருமாள் கோயிலில் பாரதம், இராமாயணம் மற்றும் புராணங்கள் படிக்க—இறையிலி நிலங்கள் வழங்கப்பட்டதைக் கூறுகிறது.<sup>3</sup>

#### ஆலங்குடி

தஞ்சை மாவட்டம் — ஆலங்குடி ஆபத்சகாயேஸ்வரர் கோயிலில் கிழக்கு மண்டபத்தின் தூணில் காணப்படும் கல்வெட்டு முதலாம் ராஜராஜ சோழனின் 9-ஆம் ஆண்டு (994)-க்கு உரியது. இவ்வூரில் இருந்த ஸ்ரீராகவப் பெருமாள் கோயிலுக்கு நிவந்தம் அளித்ததைக் கூறுகிறது. இராமர் கோயில் மறைந்து விட்டது. அக்கோயிலுக்கு உரியதும் கல்வெட்டுடன் உள்ளதுமான இத்தூண் பிற்காலத் திருப் பணியில் சிவன் கோயில் மண்டபத்தில் இடம் பெற்றுள்ளது.<sup>4</sup>

#### அம்மங்குடி

தஞ்சை மாவட்டம் — அம்மங்குடிப் பெருமாள் கோயிலில் கல்வெட்டுடன் தனியாகக் காணப்படும் துண்டுக் கற்பலகை, மறைந்து போன இராமர் கோயிலுக்கு உரியது. கல்வெட்டு முதலாம் இராஜ ராஜனின் ஆட்சி ஆண்டு 9-இல் (994) ராமதேவப் பெருமாள் கோயி மலர்த்தோட்டங்கள் நிவந்தங்களாக அளிக்கப்பட்டதைக்

#### திருமெய்ஞானம்

தஞ்சை மாவட்டம் — திருமெய்ஞானம் ஞானபரமேஸ்வரர் கோயிலில் உள்ள ஒரு கல்வெட்டு முதலாம் இராஜராஜ சோழனின் 24-ஆம் ஆண்டுக்குரியது (1009). திருநாராயண விண்ணகரத்து லக்ஷ்மிராகவப் பெருமானுக்கு அளித்த நிவந்தத்தைக் கூறுகிறது. -லகப்பிரசித்திப் பெற்ற பருத்தியூர் இராமர்தான் இக்கல்வெட்டில் குறிக்கப்பட்டு அந்த இராமர் கோயில் இன்றும் உள்ளது.

## உத்திரமேரூர்

செங்கல்பட்டு மாவட்டம் — உத்திரமேரூர் மிகவும் பழமையான வைணவத் தலமாகும். இவ்வூரில் உள்ள வைகுந்தப்பெருமாள் கோயிலிலும், சுந்தர வரதப் பெருமாள் கோயிலிலும் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் பல உள்ளன.<sup>7</sup> பிற்காலப் பல்லவர், கன்னர தேவன் கிருஷ்ணா, சோழமன்னர்கள் ஆகியோரது கல்வெட்டுக்களில் வைணவரின் குடியிருப்புக்கள் — வாமனச்சேரி, ரிக்ஷிகேசவச்சேரி, நாராயணச்சேரி, கோவிந்தச்சேரி, திருவிக்கிரமச்சேரி, பத்மனாபச்சேரி, மாதவச்சேரி, விஷ்ணுச்சேரி என்று திருமாவின் பெயரால் அழைக்கப்படுகின்றன. திருக்கோயிலூர் திருவிக்கிரமப் பெருமாள் கோயிலில் உள்ள இரண்டாம் குலோத்துங்கனின் 6-ஆம் ஆண்டுக் கல்வெட்டிலும் (1139) வாமனச்சேரி, திருவிக்கிரமச்சேரி ஆகியவை கூறப்பட்டுள்ளன.<sup>8</sup> இதேபோன்று பாண்டிச்சேரிக்கு அருகே உள்ள திருபுவனமாதேவி, சதுர்வேதிமங்கலமாகிய திருபுவனைக் கிராமத்து வரதராஜப் பெருமாள் கோயிலில் காணப்படும் உத்தம சோழனின் கல்வெட்டுக்களிலும் (986) முதலாம் இராஜேந்திர சோழனின் 6-ஆம் ஆண்டுக் கல்வெட்டிலும் (1018)—வைணவரின் குடியிருப்புக்கள் — கேசவச்சேரி நாராயணச்சேரி, மாதவச்சேரி, கோவிந்தச்சேரி, விஷ்ணுச்சேரி, மதுசூதனச்சேரி, திருவிக்கிரமச்சேரி, வாமனச்சேரி, ரிக்ஷிகேசச்சேரி, ஸ்ரீதரச்சேரி, பத்மனாபச்சேரி, தாமோதரச்சேரி என்று குறிப்பிடப்படுகின்றன.<sup>9</sup> நம்மாழ்வாரின் திருவாய்மொழி 2-கேசவன்தமர் என்னும் 7-வது பதிகத்தில் திருமாவின் பன்னிரண்டு பெயர்கள் அந்தாதிப் பாடல்களில் வருகின்றன. கேசவா, நாராயணா, மாதவா, கோவிந்தா, விஷ்ணு, மதுசூதனா, திருவிக்கிரமா, வாமனா, ரிக்ஷிகேசவா, ஸ்ரீதரா, பத்மனாபா, தாமோதரா என்று பன்னிரண்டு பெயர்களும் பன்னிரண்டு அந்தாதிப் பாடல்களில் இடம் பெறுகின்றன. அதே பெயர்களில் வைணவத் தலங்களில் வைணவர் குடியிருப்புக்கள் இருந்தன என்பதைக் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் கூறுகின்றன.

உத்திரமேரூர் வைகுந்தப்பெருமாள் கோயிலில் உள்ள முதல் பராந்தக சோழனது கல்வெட்டு ஒன்று ஆட்சி ஆண்டு 15-க்கு (912) உரியது. கோவிந்தச்சேரியைச் சேர்ந்த ஒரு பக்தன் திருஅயோத்திப் பெருமாள் அடிகளுக்கு நிலங்கள் அளித்ததைக் கூறுகிறது. இங்கு இராமர் கோயில் ஒன்று பராந்தகன் காலத்திலேயே இருந்துள்ளது.<sup>10</sup>

உத்திரமேரூர் சுந்தர வரதப்பெருமாள் கோயிலில் உள்ள கல்வெட்டு ஒன்று முதலாம் இராஜராஜனின் 24-ஆம் ஆண்டுக்குரியது (1009). ஸ்ரீவிலி விஷ்ணு கிரகத்தில் நின்று அருளும் ஸ்ரீராகவதேவர் முன்பு நிசதம் நுந்தா விளக்கு எரிக்க ரிக்ஷிகேசவச்சேரியைச் சேர்ந்த

ஒரு பக்தன் 96-ஆடுகள் அளித்ததைக் கூறுகிறது.<sup>11</sup> முதலாம் இராஜேந்திரனின் கல்வெட்டு ஒன்று சுவையான செய்தியைக் கூறுகிறது. இக்கல்வெட்டு மன்னனின் மூன்றாம் ஆட்சி ஆண்டில் (1015) வெட்டப்பட்டது. ஸ்ரீராகவ தேவர்க்கு மலர்த்தோட்டம் அளிக்கப் பட்டதையும் நிசதம் கோயிலில் மூன்று வேளையும் திருஅமிர்து படைத்துப் பிரசாதத்தை, திருப்பதியம் பாரடும் ஸ்ரீவைஷ்ணவர்களுக்கு அளிக்க வேண்டும் என்று ஊர்ச் சபையினர் செய்த முடிவையும் கூறுகிறது.<sup>12</sup> மற்றொரு கல்வெட்டு இராஜேந்திரனின் 19-ஆம் ஆண்டுக் குரியது (1031). கோயிலில் திருவாய்மொழி பாடுவதற்கும், ஸ்ரீராகவ தேவர்க்கு திருச்செந்நடைக்கும் அளித்த நிவந்தம் சொல்லப் பட்டுள்ளது.<sup>13</sup> மன்னனின் 26-ஆம் ஆண்டுக் கல்வெட்டு (1038) திருவாய்மொழி விண்ணப்பித்தலையும், மாசி புனர்ப்பூச திருவிழா வினையும் குறிப்பிடுகிறது.<sup>14</sup>

நாலாயிரத் திவ்யப்பிரபந்தத்தில் நம்மாழ்வாரின் பதிகங்கள் திருவாய்மொழி என்று அழைக்கப்படும். இராஜேந்திர சோழனின் கல்வெட்டுக்களில்தான் முதன் முதலாக திருவாய்மொழி என்ற சொல் இடம் பெறுகிறது. இச்செய்தி நாலாயிரத் திவ்யப் பிரபந்தம் தொகுக்கப்பட்ட காலத்தை அறிந்துக் கொள்வதற்கு பெரிதும் உதவு அதனையும் இங்குச் சிறிது காண்போம்.

### நாலாயிரத் திவ்யப்பிரபந்தம்

தென்னாற்காடு மாவட்டம் — எண்ணாயிரம் கிராமத்து அழகிய நரசிங்கப் பெருமாள் கோயிலில் உள்ள கல்வெட்டு ஒன்று முதலாம் இராஜேந்திரனின் 12-ஆம் ஆண்டுக்குரியது (1024). இக்கல்வெட்டிலும் திருவாய்மொழி விண்ணப்பித்தல் கூறப்படுகிறது.<sup>15</sup> இதனால் நாலாயிரத் திவ்யப்பிரபந்தம் முதலாம் இராஜேந்திர சோழன் காலத்து 1024-க்கு முன் தொகுக்கப்பட்டது எனக் கொள்ளலாம்.

தென்னாற்காடு மாவட்டத்தில் உள்ள காட்டுமன்னார் கோயில் என்று அழைக்கப்படும் ஊருக்கு வீரநாராயண சதுர்வேதி மங்கலம் என்று பெயர். இவ்வூர் வீரநாராயணன் புரம் என்றும் அழைக்கப்பட்டது. இவ்வூரை முதல் பராந்தக சோழன் (907-54) தோற்றுவித்தான்.<sup>16</sup>

வைணவ ஆசாரியரான நாதமுனிகள் வீரநாராயணபுரத்தில் அவதரித்தார். இளமையில் தம் பெற்றோர்களுடன் வடநாடு சென்று வைணவத் தலங்கள் பலவற்றைத் தரிசித்தார். யமுனைத் துறையில் (மதுரா) பலநாள் வசித்தார். பின்பு வீரநாராயணபுரம் வந்து வசிக்

கலானார். ஒருநாள் திருக்குடந்தை ஆராஅமுதன் மீது நம்மாழ்வார் பாடியுள்ள பதிகத்தினைக்கேட்டார். பன்னிரண்டு ஆழ்வார்களின் பாசுரங்களையும் அறியவேண்டும் என்ற அவாவினால், பாண்டி நாடு சென்று ஆழ்வார் திருநகரியில் தங்கினார். ஆழ்வார்களின் பாசுரங்களைச் சேகரித்தார். பதிகப் பாடல்களை ஒன்றாகத் தொகுத்து நாலாயிரத் திவ்யப்பிரபந்தம் என்று பெயர் சூட்டினார். பாடல் தொகுப்புகளுக்கு தலைப்புப் பெயர்கள் அளித்தார். நாலாயிரத் திவ்யப்பிரபந்தத்தை உலகோர்க்கு அளித்த பிறகு — நாதமுனிகள் வீரநாராயண புரத்தில் தங்கி வசிக்கலானார். கங்கை கொண்ட சோழபுரத்துச்சோழ மன்னனுடன் தொடர்பு கொண்டார். மன்னனும் நாதமுனிகளைப் போற்றினான். “திருவுடை மன்னரைக் கண்டால் திருமலைக் கண்டேனே” என்ற திருமங்கை ஆழ்வாரின் அருள் வாக்கை அனுபவித்தவர் நாதமுனிகள். இவ்வனுபவத்திற்கு இணங்க கங்கைகொண்ட சோழபுரத்துச்சோழ மன்னனைக் கண்ணாகவும், ஸ்ரீராமனாகவும் நினைத்து மகிழ்ந்தார். நாதமுனிகள் கங்கைகொண்ட சோழபுரத்தில் இறந்தார்.<sup>17</sup>

முதல் இராஜேந்திர சோழன் 1023-இல் வடநாட்டுத் திக்விஜயத்தில் வெற்றி வாகை சூடிக்கங்கைகொண்ட சோழன் என அழைக்கப்பட்டான். இவ்வெற்றியின் நினைவாகக்கங்கைகொண்ட சோழபுரத்தைத் தோற்றுவித்தான். இந்நகரின் பெயர் முதன் முதலாக இராஜேந்திரனின் 16-ஆம் ஆண்டு கல்வெட்டில் இடம் பெறுகிறது.<sup>18</sup> எனவே கங்கைகொண்டசோழபுரம் 1028-க்கு முன் கட்டப்பட்டது எனக் கொள்ளலாம். நாதமுனிகள் வரலாற்றையும் கல்வெட்டுச் செய்திகளையும் இணைத்துப் பார்த்தால்

- 1) இராஜேந்திர சோழன் காலத்து கி.பி. 1024-க்குமுன் நாதமுனிகள் நாலாயிரத் திவ்யப்பிரபந்தத்தை தொகுத்து அளித்தார் என்று கொள்ளலாம்.
- 2) நாதமுனிகளால் போற்றப்பட்ட மன்னன் இராஜேந்திர சோழனே ஆவான். நாதமுனிகள் இம்மன்னனையே — கண்ணனாகவும் ஸ்ரீராமனாகவும் கருதிப் பெரிதும் போற்றினார்.
- 3) இராஜேந்திர சோழன் காலம் முதலாக நாலாயிரத் திவ்யப்பிரபந்தம் பிரபலமடைந்தது. ஆழ்வார்களின் பதிகங்களுக்குப் பிரபந்தத் தொகுப்பில் நாதமுனிகள் அளித்த பெயர்களை இராஜேந்திர சோழனுடைய கல்வெட்டிலும் அவனுக்குப்பின் வந்த சோழமன்னர்களின் கல்வெட்டுக்களிலும் காணலாம்.



இராஜேந்திரனின் கல்வெட்டுக்களில் திருவாய்மொழி குறிப்பிடப்படுவதை முன்பே கண்டோம். அவனது மகனான இராஜாதிராஜன் கல்வெட்டு ஒன்று திருபுவனைக் கிராமத்து வரதராஜப் பெருமாள்கோயிலில் உள்ளது. இக்கல்வெட்டு மன்னனது ஆட்சி ஆண்டு 30 (கி.பி. 1048) -இல் வெட்டப்பட்டது. இக்கல்வெட்டிலும் திருவாய்மொழி விண்ணப்பித்தல் சொல்லப்பட்டுள்ளது.<sup>19</sup> இம் மன்னனது தம்பியான இரண்டாம் இராஜேந்திரனின் மகன் சோழ கேரளனாவான்.<sup>20</sup> சோழ கேரளனது மூன்றாம் ஆண்டு (1057) வெட்டப்பட்ட கல்வெட்டு ஒன்று திருக்கோவிலூரில் கிடைத்துள்ளது. திருமங்கை ஆழ்வாரின் திருநெடுந்தரண்டகம் விண்ணப்பித்தல் சொல்லப்படுகிறது.<sup>21</sup>

ஸ்ரீரங்கத்திலிருந்து கிடைக்கும் முதல் குலோத்துங்க சோழனது 15-ஆம் ஆண்டுக் கல்வெட்டில் (1085), திருப்பள்ளி எழுச்சி, திருவாய்மொழி விண்ணப்பம் சொல்லப்பட்டுள்ளது. மற்றொரு கல்வெட்டு குலோத்துங்கனின் 18-ஆம் ஆண்டுக்குரியது (1088). திருஅரங்கப்பெருமாள் முன்பு - குலசேகர ஆழ்வாரின் தேட்டருந்திறல் திருப்பதிகம் விண்ணப்பம் செய்தல் கூறப்படுகிறது.<sup>22</sup> திருக்கோவிலூர் திருவிக்கிரமப் பெருமாள் கோயிலிலிருந்து கிடைக்கும் கல்வெட்டு ஒன்று குலோத்துங்கனின் 25-ஆம் ஆண்டுக்குரியது (1095). கோவிலில் ஆண்டாளின் திருப்பரவைப் பதிகங்கள் விண்ணப்பித்தலை கூறுகின்றது.<sup>23</sup>

நாதமுனிகளின் - சீடர் உய்யக்கொண்டார் ஆவார். இவர் ஆண்டாளின் மீது மிகுந்த பக்தி கொண்டவர்-இருபாடல்களில்

..... இன்னிசையால்

பாடிக்கொடுத்தாள் நற்பாமாலை பூமாலை

சூடிக்கொடுத்தாளைச் சொல்லு.

சூடிக் கொடுத்த சுடர்க்கொடியே தொல்பாவை

பாடி அருளவல்ல பல்வளையாய் ....

என்று உய்யக்கொண்டார் ஆண்டாளைப் புகழ்வார். ஸ்ரீரங்கத்தில் உள்ள இரண்டாம் குலோத்துங்க சோழனின் கல்வெட்டு யாண்டு 9-ஆவது மேஷநாயற்று அபர பஷத்து பஞ்சமியும் வெள்ளிக் கிழமையும் பெற்ற பூரட்டாதி நாளுக்கு உரியது. இதன் காலம் கி.பி. 1142 ஏப்ரல் மாதம் 17-ஆம் தேதி ஆகும். சூடிக்கொடுத்தாள் என்னும் திருநாமத்தால் திருநந்தவனம் அமைக்கப்பட்டு திருஅரங்கப்பெருமாளுக்கு நிசதம் இத்தோட்டத்திலிருந்து திருப்பள்ளித் தாமம் எடுத்து விண்ணப்பம் செய்ய வேண்டும் என்று கூறுகிறது.<sup>24</sup>

இராஜேந்திர சோழன் காலத்து 1024-க்கு முன் நாதமுனிகளால் தொகுக்கப்பட்டு உலகோர்க்கு அளிக்கப்பட்ட நாலாயிரத் திவ்யப்பிரபந்தம் சோழர்கள் காலத்தில் பிரபலமான செய்தியினை இக்கல் வெட்டுக்கள் படம் பிடித்துக் காட்டுகின்றன. நாலாயிரத் திவ்யப் பிரபந்த கால ஆய்வு பெரிய அளவில் தொடர்ந்து செய்யப்பட வேண்டிய ஆராய்ச்சியாகும்.

### சிறுதாலூர்

செங்கல்பட்டு மாவட்டம்-சிறுதாலூர் கிராமத்தில் பெருமாள் கோயிலும் சிவன் கோயிலும் பாழடைந்த நிலையில் உள்ளன. பெருமாள் கோயிலில் 7 கல்வெட்டுக்கள் கிடைத்துள்ளன.<sup>25</sup> இவைகளில் இக்கோயில் பரசுராம விண்ணகரம் என்று அழைக்கப்படுகிறது. ஊரின் பெயர் ஆழர்க்கோட்டத்தைச் சார்ந்த நரசிம்மமங்கலம் என்று கூறப்படுகின்றது. மிகப்பழமையான கல்வெட்டு பாத்திவேந்தரவர் மனின் 5-ஆம் ஆண்டுக்குரியது (964). திருமேற்றளி நின்றருளின பெருமானடிகளின் கோயிலில் தினமும் முன்று வேளை ஸ்ரீபலியின் போது பாடுவதற்காகச் சிங்கப்பெருமாள் என்பவனுக்கு ஊர்ச் சபையினர் நிலம் அளித்தது கூறப்படுகிறது. முதலாம் ராஜராஜனின் இரண்டு கல்வெட்டுக்கள் 9-ஆம் ஆண்டு (994), 10-ஆம் ஆண்டு (995-)க்கு உரியவை. பரசுராம விண்ணகர் ஆள்வார் கோயிலில் திருப்பள்ளி எழுச்சிக்கும், மதியம் திருஆராதனைக்கும், நுந்தா விளக்கு எரிப்பதற்கும் அளிக்கப்பட்ட நிவந்தங்கள் கூறப்படுகின்றன. இரண்டாம் இராஜேந்திர தேவனின் (1052-64) கல்வெட்டில் பரசுராம விண்ணகர் ஆள்வார் கோயிலில் வெண்ணைக் கூத்தாள்வார் (கிருஷ்ணன்) பிரதிஷ்டை செய்யப்பட்டது கூறப்படுகிறது. மாறவர்மன் வீரபாண்டியனின் இரண்டு கல்வெட்டுக்களும் 10-ஆம் ஆண்டுக்கு (1344) உரியன. பரசுராம விண்ணகர் ஆள்வார் கோயிலின் திரு ஆராதனைக்காக நரசிங்கச் சதுர்வேதிமங்கலமாகிய சிறுதாலூர் ஊரவரும், ஊர்ச் சபையினரும், கோயிலின் நிலங்களுக்கு உரிய வரியைத் தருவதற்குச் சம்மதித்தனர் என்று முதல் கல்வெட்டு சொல்லுகிறது. ராஜகேசரி சதுர்வேதிமங்கலத்துச் சபையார் பரசுராம விண்ணகர் கோயிலுக்கு திருநாமத்துக் காணியாக இறையிலி நிலங்கள் அளித்ததை இரண்டாவது கல்வெட்டுக் கூறுகிறது.

### எண்ணாமீரம்

தென்னாற்காடு மாவட்டம்—எண்ணாமீரம் கிராமத்தில் உள்ள அழகிய நரசிங்கப் பெருமாள் கோயில் முதலாம் இராஜராஜ சோழன் காலத்துக்கட்டப்பட்டது. ஊரின் பெயர் இராஜராஜ சதுர்வேதிமங்கலமாகும். கோயில், இராஜராஜ விண்ணகர் என்று அழைக்கப்

பட்டது. இக்கோயிலினை ஒட்டி ஒரு கல்லூரி இருந்தது. வேதம், வியாக்கர்ணம், மீமாம்சம் முதலியவை கற்றுக் கொடுக்கப்பட்டன. பல ஆசிரியர்களும், ஏராளமான மாணவர்களும் இருந்தனர். தினம் நால்வர் கோயிலில் தி நவரய்மொழி விண்ணப்பித்தனர். இச்செய்திகளை இராஜேந்திர சோழனின் 12-ஆம் ஆண்டுக் (1024) கல்வெட்டு கூறுகிறது.<sup>26</sup> இவ்வாலயத்தில் இராமர் கோயிலும் இருந்தது. அக் கோயிலுக்கு இராஜேந்திரனின் முப்பதாம் ஆண்டு ஆடி மாதத்தில் (1031) நிவந்தம் அளிக்கப்பட்டது.<sup>27</sup>

. இஹ் கோயிலில் எழுந்தருளி நின்று  
திருஆராதனை கொண்டு அருளிகின்ற ஸ்ரீராகவச்  
சக்கரவர்த்திகள் மரசி திருபுனர்ப்பூசப்புறமும்  
கருணாகர விளாகமும் . . . .

என்பது சாசன வாசகம். இராமனது நக்ஷத்திரம் புனர்ப்பூசமாகும். மரசி மாதத்தில் திருவிழா எடுப்பதற்காக அளிக்கப்பட்ட நிலங்களுக்கு திருப்புனர்ப்பூசப்புறம் என்றும், விளாகத்துக்கு (கருணையே வடிவான) இராமனின் பெயரால் கருணாகர விளாகம் என்றும் சாசனம் கூறுவது பெரு விருந்தாய் அமைகிறது.

வடமதுரை

திருவல்லம் தாலுக்கா வடமதுரையிலிருந்து கிடைக்கும் இராஜேந்திரனது 25-ஆவது ஆண்டு (1037) கல்வெட்டு பெரிதும் சுவையான செய்தியினைத் தருகிறது.<sup>28</sup>

. ... உடையார் ராஜேந்திர சோழ தேவர்க்கு  
யாண்டு 25-ஆவது ஜெயங்கொண்ட சோழ மண்டலத்து  
பையூரிளங்கோட்டத்து வெண்க நாட்டு ஜெயங்கொண்ட சோழ  
சதுர்வேதி மங்கலத்து திருஅயோத்தி சக்கரவர்த்திக்கு  
நம்பிராட்டியாரை எழுந்தருளிவித்து திருக்கல்யாணம்  
செய்து ஸ்ரீதனம் வைத்த நிலம் . ....

என்று கூறிச் செல்கிறது கல்வெட்டு. சீதா கல்யாணம் செய்து மகிழ்ந்த ராஜேந்திரன் சீதா தேவிக்கு சீதனமாக நிலமும் அளித்தான். சீதையின் தகப்பனார் ஜனக மகாராஜன் சீதனமாக நிலம் கொடுத்தாரா என்பது நமக்குத் தெரியாது. ஆனால் சோழன் கொடுத்து மகிழ்ந்தான். அவன் கட்டிய இராமர் கோயில் பிற்காலத்தில் பாழடைந்து விட்டது. ஆதிகேசவப் பெருமாள் கோயில் என்று இன்று அழைக்கப்படுகிறது. இது இராமர் கோயில்தான் என்று கூறும் கல்வெட்டு உள்ள கற்பலகையும் மண்டபத்தின் உச்சிக் கூறைக்குச் சென்று விட்டது.

## பிர்மதேசம்

வட ஆற்காடு மாவட்டம்—செய்யாறு தாலுக்கா பிர்மதேசம் சந்திர மௌளீஸ்வர கோயிலில் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் பல உள்ளன. முதலாம் இராஜாதிராஜ சோழனின் கல்வெட்டு ஒன்று ஆட்சி ஆண்டு 32 (1050)-இல் வெட்டப்பட்டது. திருச்சிற்றம்பலமுடையார் கோயிலுக்கு அளித்த நிவந்தத்தைக் கூறும்போது, -அவ்வூரில் உள்ள திரு அயோத்தி ஆள்வார் கோயிலையும் குறிப்பிடுகிறது.<sup>29</sup>

## நரசிங்கமங்கலம்

செங்கல்பட்டு மாவட்டம்—பொன்னேரி தாலுக்கா, நரசிங்கமங்கலத்தில் உள்ள நரசிம்மப்பெருமாள் கோயில் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் அரிய செய்திகளைத் தருகின்றன. இவ்வூர் முதலாம் இராஜேந்திர சோழன் காலத்தில் (1012—1044) மதுராந்தக நல்லூர் என்று அழைக்கப்பட்டது. திருமால் கோயில் இராஜேந்திர சோழனின் பெயரால் மதுராந்தக விண்ணகர் என்று அழைக்கப்பட்டது. கருவறையில் திருமாலின் திருமேனி வழிபாட்டில் இருந்தது. இவ்வாலயத்துள் முதல் குலோத்துங்கன் காலத்தில் இராமர் கோயில் கட்டப்பட்டது. காலத்தின் கோலத்தில் மதுராந்தக விண்ணகர் பெருமாள் திருமேனியும் இராமரின் திருமேனியும் மறைந்தன. விஜயநகர மன்னன் அச்சுததேவ மகாராயர் காலத்தில் கருவறையில் (1533) லக்ஷ்மிநரசிம்மமூர்த்தி எழுந்தருளிவிக்கப்பட்டார். இராமர் கோயிலில் நாச்சியார் (மகாலக்ஷ்மி) குடிபுகுந்தாள். ஊரின் பெயரும், நரசிம்மபுரமாகி விட்டது. இருப்பினும் நாச்சியார் கோயிலின் கல்வெட்டுக்களும், கருவறையின் கல்வெட்டுக்களும் பழம் பெருமையையும், புதிய மாற்றத்தினையும் படம்பிடித்துக் காட்டுகின்றன.

நாச்சியார் (மகாலக்ஷ்மி). கோயிலில் உள்ள கல்வெட்டுக்களில்<sup>30</sup> மிகப் பழமையானவை—முதல் குலோத்துங்க சோழன் (1070—1122) காலத்தில் வெட்டப்பட்டவை. மன்னனது 34-வது (1104) ஆண்டில் இராமர் கோயில் கட்டப்பட்ட செய்தியினை மூன்று கல்வெட்டுக்கள் அறிவிக்கின்றன. மதுராந்தக விண்ணகர் ஆள்வார் கோயிலில் ஸ்ரீ இராமனும், சீதாதேவியும், இளையபெருமானான இலக்குமணனும் எழுந்தருளிவிக்கப்பட்டனர். இத்திருமேனிகளை எழுந்தருளிவித்தவன் கிடாரங்கொண்ட சோழபுரத்து வாணியன் பண்ணநான் தாழி சூரையான ஸ்ரீ இராமதூர தனரவரன் திருவாராதனைக்கும், விளக்கு எரிப்பதற்கும் கிராமமக்கள் உதவி செய்தனர். வாசுதேவன் இராஜசுந்தரன் என்பவன் இராமர் கோயிலுக்கு நிலங்கள் அளித்தான். விக்கிரம சோழனின் 5-ஆம் ஆண்டில் (1023) கோட்டுர் சபையினர் கோயிலுக்கு நிலங்கள் அளித்தனர்.

காலத்தின் கோலத்தில் இவ்வாலயம் பாழடைந்துவிட்டது. அச்சுததேவராயன் காலத்தில் (1533) மூலவரின் கருவறை புதுப் பிக்கப்பட்டு, ஸ்ரீ லக்ஷ்மிநரசிம்மமூர்த்தி எழுந்தருளினிக்கப்பட்டார். கருவறையின் சுவரில் உள்ள 6 கல்வெட்டுக்களும் அச்சுததேவராயரின் காலத்தில் வெட்டப்பட்டவை<sup>31</sup>. புதிதாக மாற்றம் செய்யப்பட்டதையும், கோயிலுக்குப் புதிதாக நிவந்தங்கள் அளித்ததையும் கூறுகின்றன. இராமர் கோயிலில் திருமகளின் திருமேனி எழுந்தருளினிக்கப்பட்டது. மதுராந்தக விண்ணகர், நரசிங்கப் பெருமாள் கோயில் என்றும், மதுராந்தகநல்லூர் நரசிம்மபுரம் என்றும் அழைக்கப்படலாயின.

பழமையான ஒரு கோயில் காலவெள்ளத்தில் எப்படி மாற்றம் அடைகிறது என்ற ஆய்வுக்கு—இக்கோயிலின் கல்வெட்டுகள் பெரிதும் துணைபுரிகின்றன.

**மதுராந்தகம்**

செங்கல்பட்டு மாவட்டம் மதுராந்தகம்—கோதண்டராமர் கோயில் பழம்பெருமை வாய்ந்தது. இன்றும் நல்ல நிலையில் வழிபாட்டில் உள்ளது. இக்கோயிலில் உள்ள கல்வெட்டுக்கள் படி எடுக்கப்பட்டு உள்ளன.

முதல் குலோத்துங்க சோழன் 1070 முதல் 1122 வரை ஆட்சி புரிந்தவன். இவனது மூத்த மகன் பராந்தக தேவன் 1110 முதல் 1119 வரை ஆட்சி புரிந்தான். பராந்தகனின் தம்பி விக்கிரம சோழன் 1118 முதல் 1135 வரை அரசு புரிந்தான்.

மதுராந்தகம் கோதண்டராமர் கோயிலில் உள்ள கல்வெட்டுக்களில் மிகப் பழமையானது பராந்தக தேவனது 7-ஆம் ஆண்டிற்கு உரியது<sup>32</sup>. ஜெயங்கொண்ட சோழமண்டலத்துக் களத்தூர் கோட்டத் துத் தனியூர் மதுராந்தகச் சதுர்வேதிமங்கலத்து திருஅயோத்திப் பெருமாள் என்று கல்வெட்டுக் கூறுகிறது. மன்னனின் திருமுகப்படி திருவிடையாட்டமாக நிலங்கள் அளிக்கப்பட்ட செய்தி விரிவாகச் சொல்லப்பட்டுள்ளது. இக்கோயில் பராந்தகன் காலத்தில் 1117-இல் கட்டப்பட்டது எனக் கொள்ளலாம்.

விக்கிரம சோழனின் 7-ஆம் ஆண்டில் (1125)-இல் ஒருத்தி தனது நிலத்தை திருஅயோத்திப் பெருமானுக்கு அளித்தாள்<sup>33</sup>. அதே மன்னனது 9-ஆம் ஆண்டில் பிராமணி பெரியநங்கைச்சாநி என்பவள், திருவிழாக்களுக்காக திருஅயோத்திப் பெருமானுக்கு நிலங்கள் அளித்தாள்<sup>34</sup>.

இரண்டாம் குலோத்துங்கனுடைய 3-வது ஆண்டில் (1136) திருஅயோத்தி கருணாகரப் பெருமானுக்குத் திருநுந்தா விளக்கும், சந்தி விளக்குகளும் எரிப்பதற்குத் தோட்டங்கள் நிவந்தங்களாக அளிக்கப்பட்டன. கருணையே வடிவான இராமனைக் கருணாகரன் என்று குலோத்துங்கன் அழைப்பது சுவையான செய்தி<sup>35</sup>.

பயக் கம்பெனியார் காலத்தில் — இவ்வூரின் கலெக்டர் சர் லைனல் ப்ளேஸ் என்பவர் சீதையின் கோயிலை முழுமையாக திருப்பணி செய்தார் என்று தெலுங்குக் கல்வெட்டுக் கூறுகிறது<sup>36</sup>. இந்த வெள்ளைக்கார அதிகாரி 1800-இல் மதுராந்தகத்தில் கலெக்டராகப் பணிபுரிந்தவர். இவர் சிறந்த இராமபக்தர் என்று கோயிலின் தலவரலாறு கூறுகின்றது.

### விஜயநாராயணம்

திருமடந்தையும், ஜெயமடந்தையும் என்று தொடங்கும் மெய்க் கீர்த்தியை உடைய சடையவர்மன் ஸ்ரீவல்லப பாண்டியன் கி. பி. 1101-இல் முடிசூடியவன். இம்மன்னனது 10 - ஆம் ஆண்டு துலாநாயற்று (1110)-இல் வெட்டப்பட்ட கல்வெட்டு ஒன்று - விஜயநாராயணத்து இராஜகோபாலஸ்வாமி ஆலயத்தில் உள்ளது. இக்கல்வெட்டில் முதல் குலோத்துங்க சோழரது 31-வது ஆண்டில் (1101)—வரகுண விண்ணகர் ஆள்வார் கோயிலுக்கும், சடகோப விண்ணகர் ஆள்வார் கோயிலுக்கும், ஸ்ரீராகவச் சக்கரவர்த்திகளுக்கும் நிலங்கள் அளிக்கப்பட்டது கூறப்படுகிறது<sup>37</sup>. இக்கட்டுரையின் ஆரம்பத்தில் வரகுணனுடைய இரண்டாம் ஆண்டில் (864) கூறப்படும் இராமர் கோயிலே ஸ்ரீவல்லபனின் காலத்தில் கி.பி. 1110-இலும் கூறப்படுகிறது எனலாம். இக்கோயிலுக்கு வரகுணனும், முதல் குலோத்துங்க சோழனும், ஸ்ரீவல்லப பாண்டியனும் நிவந்தங்கள் அளித்துள்ளனர்.

### சேர்மாதேவி

திருநெல்வேலி மாவட்டம்-அம்பாசமுத்திரம் வட்டம், சேர்மாதேவியில் உள்ள இராமசுவாமி கோயில் மிகப்பழமையானது. இக்கோயிலில் உள்ள கல்வெட்டுக்கள் படி எடுக்கப்பட்டு சாசன அறிக்கைகளில் வெளிவந்துள்ளன<sup>38</sup>. இக்கல்வெட்டுக்கள் சோழர்கள், இடைக்காலப் பாண்டியர், விஜயநகர மன்னர்கள்—காலங்களில் வெட்டப்பட்டவை. முதலாம் ராஜராஜ சோழ மன்னனது 15-ஆம் ஆட்சி ஆண்டு கல்வெட்டே காலத்தால் முந்தியது<sup>39</sup>. எனவே இக்கோயில் இராஜராஜன் காலத்தில் கி. பி. 1000-க்கு முன் கட்டப்பட்டது

எனக்கொள்ளலாம். சேரன் மகாதேவி சதுர்வேதிமங்கலத்து நிகரிலி சோழ விண்ணகர் ஆள்வார் என்று கோயில் குறிப்பிடப்படுகிறது. நிகரிலி சோழன் என்பது இராஜராஜனின் விருதுப்பெயராகும். இப் பெயரில் இந்த விஷ்ணு கோயிலை இராஜராஜன் எடுப்பித்துள்ளான். இக்கோயிலுக்குள் இருந்த மூலவர் திருமாலா அல்லது கிருஷ்ணனா என்பது தெரியவில்லை. இராஜராஜனுக்குப் பின்வந்த இராஜேந்திரன் (1012-1044) அவனது மகன் சடையவர் உடையார் சுந்தரசோழ பாண்டியன் (1021-1052) ஆகியோரது கல்வெட்டுக்களிலும் நிகரிலி சோழ விண்ணகர் ஆள்வார் என்றே சொல்லப்பட்டுள்ளது. இராஜேந்திர சோழனது எட்டாம் ஆண்டுக் கல்வெட்டில் (1020) இவ்வூரில் இருக்கும் இராகவச் சக்கரவர்த்தியின் கோயிலுக்கு நிவந்தம் அளித்தது கூறப்படுகிறது<sup>40</sup>.

1146-இல் முடிகுடிய மாறவர்மன் ஸ்ரீவல்லபனின் 9-ஆம் ஆண்டு 11-ஆம் ஆண்டுக் கல்வெட்டுக்களில் வண்துவராபதி ஆள்வார் கோயில் என்று குறிப்பிடப்படுகிறது.<sup>41</sup> ஸ்ரீவல்லபனின் மகனும் பூதல மடந்தை என்னும் மெய்க்கீர்த்தி உடையவனுமான சடையவர்மன் குலசேகரன் 1162-இல் முடிகுடியவன். இம்மன்னனது 5-ஆம் ஆட்சிக் (1167) கல்வெட்டில் வண்துவராபதி எம்பெருமான் கோயில் என்று சொல்லப்பட்டுள்ளது.<sup>42</sup> எனவே இது கிருஷ்ணனுக்கு உரிய கோயில் என்பது வெள்ளிடைமலை.

கி.பி. 1216-இல் முடிகுடியவனும் திருமகள், ஜெயமகள் என்னும் மெய்க்கீர்த்தியை உடையவனுமான மாறவர்மன் விக்கிரம பாண்டியனின் 13-ஆம் ஆண்டுக் கல்வெட்டிலும்<sup>43</sup> வண்துவராபதி என்றே சொல்லப்படுகிறது.

காலவெள்ளத்தில் ஏதோ மாற்றம் ஏற்பட்டுள்ளது. கொல்லம் 676 ஆனி மாதம் 25-ஆம் தேதி (கி.பி. 1501)-இல் வெட்டப்பட்டுள்ள கல்வெட்டில், இராமர் கோயிலில் மாதந்தோறும் புனர்வசு அன்று திருவிழா எடுக்க வேண்டும் என்று கூறப்பட்டுள்ளது. கால வெள்ளத்தில் கிருஷ்ணனின் கோயில் இராமர் கோயிலாயிற்று. (இராஜேந்திர சோழன் காலத்தில் குறிப்பிடப்படும் இராமர் ஒருவேளை இக்கோயிலில் குடிபுகுந்தாரோ?).

சேர்மாதேவி நடுவில் அப்பர் கோயிலும் மிகப்பழமையானதாகும். இக்கோயிலின் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் சாசன அறிக்கையில் வெளிவந்துள்ளன.<sup>44</sup> பூமகள், ஜெயமகள் என்னும் மெய்க்கீர்த்தி உடையவனும் கி. பி. 1146-இல் முடிகுடியவனுமான மாறவர்மன் ஸ்ரீவல்லபனின் 5-ஆம் ஆண்டில் (1151) இக்கோயில் கட்டப்பட்டு

இருக்க வேண்டும். கோயிலின் பெயர் நடுவில் திருமுற்றத்து ஸ்ரீவல்லப விண்ணகர் ஆள்வார் கோயிலாகும்.<sup>45</sup>

1181-இல் முடிசூடிய மாறவர்மன் விக்கிரம பாண்டியனது கல்வெட்டு மன்னனது 8-ஆம் ஆண்டில் (1189) வெட்டப்பட்டது.<sup>46</sup> விக்கிரம பாண்டியன் ஸ்ரீவல்லப விண்ணகர் ஆள்வார் கோயிலில்— இராமன், சீதை, இலக்குமணன் ஆகியோரது விக்கிரகங்களை செய்து வைத்தான் என்று சொல்லப்பட்டுள்ளது. இராமனுக்கு விழா எடுக்க மதுவர்க்க தக்ஷிணையாக, நிலங்களும் கொடுக்கப்பட்டன.

இந்த விக்கிரம பாண்டியனுக்குச் சிங்கள மன்னர்களால் ஓயாத தொல்லை இருந்தது. விக்கிரம பாண்டியன் மூன்றாம் குலோத்துங்க சோழனிடம் முறையிட்டான். சோழனும் சிங்களவரை விரட்டி, இலங்கையின் மீதும் படையெடுத்து, வெற்றிவாகைசூடி, தென் இலங்கையர்கோன் தலை அரிந்த திருநெடுமால் போன்று விளங்கினான். இலங்கைப் படையெடுப்பு கி.பி. 1189-இல் நடந்தது. இலங்கை மன்னர்களால் இனி தொல்லை இல்லை என மகிழ்ந்த விக்கிரம பாண்டியன் - இராமர், சீதை, இலக்குவன் ஆகியோரது விக்கிரகங்களை கோயிலில் வைத்து விழாவும் எடுத்து விட்டான். இச்சரித்திர நிகழ்ச்சிகளின் விளக்கமான ஆய்வை எனது 'இடைக்கால பாண்டியர்' நூலில் காணலாம்.<sup>47</sup>

### ஸ்ரீவில்லிபுத்தூர்

முதலாம் மாறவர்மன் சுந்தரபாண்டியன் கி.பி. 1216-இல் முடி சூடியவன். ஸ்ரீவில்லிபுத்தூரில் இவனது 15-ஆம் ஆண்டில் (1231) வெட்டப்பட்ட இரண்டு கல்வெட்டுக்கள் உள்ளன. அவை திரு அயோத்தி விண்ணகர் ஆள்வார் கோயிலைக் குறிப்பிடுகின்றன. இதற்கு மேல் இக்கோயிலைப்பற்றி அறிந்துக்கொள்ள இயலவில்லை.<sup>48</sup>

### திருநெல்வேலி

இரண்டாம் மாறவர்மன் சுந்தரபாண்டியன் 1238-இல் முடி சூடியவன். திருநெல்வேலி நெல்லை அப்பர் கோயிலில் உள்ள கல் வெட்டு ஒன்று இம்மன்னனது 8-ஆம் ஆண்டு ஆட்சியில் வெட்டப்பட்டது; (கி.பி. 1246). நெல்லையப்பர் கோயிலுக்கு அளித்த நிவந்தங்களைக் கூறுமிடத்து — திருமேற்கோரையில் சீராம விண்ணகர் ஆள்வார்க்குப் பங்கு இரண்டும், பாண்டிமாதேவி ஈஸ்வர முடையார்க்குப் பங்கு இரண்டும் என்று கூறிச்செல்கிறது.<sup>49</sup>

சீராம விண்ணகர் ஆள்வார் என்பது இராமர் கோயிலாகும். பாண்டிமாதேவி ஈஸ்வரம் என்பது நின்ற சீர் நெடுமாற நாயனாரின்



அரசியார் மங்கையர்க்கரசியைக் குறிப்பிடுவதாக இருக்கலாம். இவள் சோழனின் மகள்.

“ மங்கையர்க்கரசி வளவர்கோன்பாவை  
பங்கயச்செல்வி பாண்டிமாதேவி ”

என்று திருஞானசம்மந்தர் திருஆலவாய். பதிகத்தில் மங்கையர்க்கரசியாரைப் புகழ்ந்து பாடி உள்ளது ஈண்டு நோக்கத்தக்கது.

திருப்புக்குழி ( காஞ்சீபுரம் வட்டம் )

தெலுங்குச் சோழன் விஜயகண்ட கோபாலன் கி. பி. 1250-இல் முடிசூடியவன். இம்மன்னனது 15-ஆம் ஆட்சியில் (1265) திருப்புக்குழியில் இராமர் கோயில் கட்டப்பட்டது. தனது பெயரையும் இணைத்து — விஜயராகவப்பெருமாள் என்று இராமனுக்குப் பெயர் சூட்டினான். இச்செய்தியினைக் கர்ப்பக்கிரகத்தில் உள்ள இம் மன்னனது கல்வெட்டு கூறுகிறது.<sup>50</sup> இராமனையும், சீதாபிராட்டியாரையும் இலக்குமணனையும் எழுந்தருளிவித்தவன், பேரரசல ராஜ்யத்து மாமனார் கோமடத்து அருளாளப்பெருமானான தியாகப் பெருமான் தாசன் ஆவான். புலியூர் கோட்டத்து நந்தம்பாக்கத்து தேவப்பெருமாள் சரணதேவன் என்பவன் திருமங்கை ஆள்வாரை எழுந்தருளிவித்தான். இச்செய்திகளைக் கூறும் இரண்டு கல்வெட்டுக்களும் கர்ப்பக்கிரகத்தின் முன்மண்டபத்து மேற்குச் சுவரில் உள்ளன.<sup>51</sup> இதே மண்டபத்தின் கிழக்குச் சுவரில் அடித்தளத்தில் உள்ள கல்வெட்டு — முதலாம் சடையவர்மன் சுந்தர பாண்டியனுக்கு உரியது. இவன் 1251-இல் முடிசூடியவன். கல்வெட்டு, பாடலாக அமைந்துள்ளது. பெருமாள் குலசேகர தேவர் திருத்தோளுக்கு நன்றாக எடுத்தகை அழகியான் துஞ்சலூர் உடையான் இம்மண்டபத்தைக் கட்டினான் எனக் கூறுகிறது.<sup>52</sup> பெருமாள் குலசேகர தேவர் என்பது சுந்தரபாண்டியனின் அண்ணனும் பூதலவனிதை என்னும் மெய்க்கீர்த்தியை உடையவனுமாகிய இரண்டாம் சடையவர்மன் குலசேகரனாவான். இவன் கி. பி. 1237-இல் முடிசூடியவன்.<sup>53</sup> இம்மன்னன் கி. பி. 1266 வரை ஆண்டவன் என்று எனது ஆய்வில் முன்பே கூறியிருந்தேன்.<sup>54</sup> 1265-இல் கட்டப்பட்ட கோயிலில்-பெருமாள் குலசேகர தேவர் திருத்தோளுக்கு நன்றாக ஒரு மண்டபம் கட்டப்பட்டது என்னும் செய்தி என் ஆய்வுக்கு பக்கபலமாக அமைகின்றது. முதலாம் சடையவர்மன் சுந்தர பாண்டியனின் 17-ஆம் ஆண்டில் (1267) பொய்கை நல்லூர் என்னும் கிராமம் கோயிலுக்கு நிவந்தமாக அளிக்கப்பட்டது. அதே மன்னனின் 18-ஆம் ஆண்டிலும் (1268) நிவந்தங்கள் அளிக்கப்பட்டன.<sup>54</sup> பாண்டிய மன்னர்களும், பிற்காலத்திய விஜயநகர

மன்னர்களும் இக்கோயிலுக்கு நிவந்தங்களும் திருப்பணிகளும் புரித்  
தனர்.<sup>55</sup>

1573-இல் முகமதியர் இக்கோயிலில் உள்ள 12 ஆழ்வார்களின்  
விக்கிரகங்களை அழித்தனர். எனவே 9 விக்கிரகங்கள் புதிதாகச்  
செய்யப்பட்டு, மூன்று விக்கிரகங்கள் பழுதுபார்க்கப்பட்டு புதுப்பிக்கப்  
பட்டன. இச்செய்தியினை விஜயநகர மன்னர் சதாசிவ மகாராயரின்  
கல்வெட்டு கூறுகிறது.<sup>56</sup>

திருக்கோவிலார்

திருக்கோவிலார் திருவிக்கிரமப் பெருமாள் கோயிலில் மூன்றாம்  
பிரகாரத்து வடப் பக்கத்தில் உள்ள இராமர் கோயிலில் மூன்று  
கல்வெட்டுக்கள் உள்ளன. அச்சுத தேவ மகாராயர் காலத்தில் சகம்  
1454 தை மாதம் (1533 ஜனவரி)-இல் வெட்டப்பட்ட கல்வெட்டே  
காலத்தால் முந்தியது.<sup>57</sup> மக்களுக்குக் குடியிருப்பு மனைகளைக்  
கட்டிக் கொடுத்ததைக் கூறுகிறது. மற்றுமொரு கல்வெட்டு  
ஸ்ரீரங்க தேவ மகாராயர் காலத்தில் சகம் 1496 (கி.பி. 1574)-இல்  
வெட்டப்பட்டது. திருக்கோவிலார் பெருமாள் கோயிலுக்குள் இருக்  
கும் சக்கரவர்த்தித் திருமகனார் கோயிலுக்குத் திருமாலை நம்பி  
திருவேங்கடவன் என்பவன் காட்டுப்பையூரில் நிலங்கள் அளித்தான்  
என்று கூறுகிறது.<sup>58</sup>

காட்டுப்பையூர் எது? அந்த நிலங்கள் யாவை? அவை எதற்  
காக அளிக்கப் பட்டன என்பதை அறிந்து கொள்ள வேண்டாமா?  
இவ்வினாக்களுக்கு உரிய விடைகளைத் திருக்கோவிலார்க்கு அருகே  
காட்டுப்பையூர் என்ற கிராமத்தில் உள்ள இரண்டு கல்வெட்டுக்களில்  
காணலாம். இவ்வூரில் இன்று ஆதிமூல கவுண்டர் கொல்லை என்று  
அழைக்கப்படும் தரிசு நிலத்தில் ஒரு பாறையில் உள்ள கல்வெட்டு  
விஜயநகர மன்னர் ஸ்ரீரங்கதேவராயரின் ஆட்சியில் சகம் 1496  
(கி.பி. 1574)-இல் வெட்டப்பட்டது, வீரபாண்டிய நல்லூரான  
காட்டுப்பையூரில் மூன்று பங்கு நிலங்களை-திருமாலை நம்பி  
திருவேங்கடதேவன் என்பவன் திருக்கோவிலார் பெருமாள் கோயிலில்  
உள்ள சக்கரவர்த்தித் திருமகனார் கோயிலுக்கு வழங்கப்பட்டதாகக்  
கூறுகிறது,<sup>59</sup> இதன் எல்லையாக இளைய பெருமாள் பற்று குறிப்  
பிடப்படுகிறது. இக்கல்வெட்டு காணப்படும் பாறைக்கு அருகில்  
இளையபெருமாள் (இலக்குவன்) கோயில் இன்றும் உள்ளது. இக்  
கோயிலுக்கு தென்மேற்கே சுமார் இரண்டு பர்லாங் தூரத்தில்  
காட்டிற்குள் இருக்கும் பாறையில் உள்ள கல்வெட்டு-இந்நிலம்  
திருமாலைநம்பி திருவேங்கடதேவனால் சக்கரவர்த்தி திருமகனார்

கோயிலுக்கு திருமாலை இறையாட்சியாகக் கொடுக்கப்பட்டது என்றும், சக்கரவர்த்தித் திருமகனார்க்குத் தினந்தோறும் மலர்கள் பறித்து அனுப்பவேண்டும் என்றும் கூறுகிறது.<sup>60</sup>

இந்த இரண்டு பாறைகளுக்கும் இடையே உள்ள காடும், தரிசு நிலங்களும் திருக்கோவலூர் பெருமாள் கோயிலில் உள்ள இராமர் கோயிலுக்கு உரியவையாக 1574-இல் விஜயநகர மன்னர் ஸ்ரீரங்கதேவராயரால் அறிவிக்கப்பட்டன. இங்கு மலர்த் தோட்டம் இருந்துள்ளது. தினமும் கோயிலுக்கு மலர்களும், மாலைகளும் இத்தோட்டத்திலிருந்து அனுப்பப்பட்டன. இராமனது நிலத்தைக் காவல் காக்க இலக்குவரின் கோயில் இந்தத் தோட்டத்தில் உள்ளது. காலத்தின் கோலத்தில்.

### படவேடு

வட ஆற்காடு மாவட்டம்-போரூர் தாலுக்கா, படவேடு கிராமத்தில் உள்ள ராமச்சந்திரப் பெருமாள் கோயிலில் ஆறு கல்வெட்டுக்கள் உள்ளன.<sup>61</sup> காலத்தால் முந்தியவை வீரப்பிரதாப தேவமகாராயரின் கல்வெட்டுக்களே ஆகும். இம்மன்னரது கல்வெட்டுக்கள் மூன்று உள்ளன. சகம் 1347-இல் (கி.பி. 1425) மன்னரது அதிகாரி சின்னமராசு என்பவன் அழகினிய பிள்ளை என்பவரை இராமச்சந்திரப் பெருமாள் கோயிலுக்கு திருவிளக்குக்குடியாக அமர்த்தினான். சகம் 1348 தை மாதத்தில் (1427) மன்னனின் அதிகாரி கருஞ்சிருத்த நாயனார் என்பவன் விஜயகண்ட கோபாலர் என்னும் விவசாயியைத் திருவிளக்குக்குடியாக அமர்த்தினான். சகம் 1351-இல் (கி.பி. 1429) திக்கிலிப்பெம்மான் என்பவனும் வடுக (தெலுங்கு) இடையர் சிலரும் திருவிளக்குக்குடிகளாக அமர்த்தப்பட்டனர்.

கோயிலில் விளக்குகள் எரிப்பதற்காக அளிக்கப்பட்டுள்ள நிலங்களை உழுது பயிரிட்டு கோயிலுக்கு உரிய வருவாயை அளிப்பவர்கள் திருவிளக்குக்குடிகள் என அழைக்கப்படுவர். இக்கோயிலுக்குப் பல இடங்களில் ஏராளமான நிலங்கள் நிவந்தங்களாக அளிக்கப்பட்டமையால், அவ்வப்போது தேவையான திருவிளக்குக்குடிகள் அமர்த்தப் பட்டனர் போலும்.

சகம் 1435-சித்திரை மாதத்தில் (1511) கிருஷ்ண தேவ மகாராயர் காலத்தில் கோயிலுக்கு உரிய நிலங்களின் உழுது பயிரிடும் உரிமையை கன்னடியன் நாயக்கப்பாடி என்பவனுக்கு 500 பணத்திற்கு விற்பனார். 500 பணமும் கோயிலுக்குச் சேர்க்கப்பட்டது. பயிரிடும் உரிமையை பெற்றவன் ஆண்டு தோறும் இராமச்சந்திர பெருமாள் கோயிலுக்கு 15 பணமும், 20 கலம் நெல்லும் கொடுக்க வேண்டும் என்று உத்திரவிடப்பட்டது.

மற்ற இருகல்வெட்டுக்களில் பிற்காலத்தில் கோயிலுக்கு விளக்கு களும் திருவிளக்குக்குடிகளும் அமர்த்தப்பட்டதைக் கூறுகின்றன.

### நெடுங்குணம்

வட ஆற்காடு மாவட்டம் - வந்தவாசி தாலுக்கா, நெடுங்குணத் தில் உள்ள இராமச்சந்திரப்பெருமாள் கோயில், விஜயநகர மன்னர்கள் காலத்தில் கட்டப்பட்டது.<sup>62</sup> சகம் 1466-இல் (கி.பி.1544) அச்சுத தேவ மகாராயர் காலத்தில் மல்லப்ப நாயக்கர் கோயிலுக்குத் திருவிடையாட்டமாக நிலங்கள் அளித்ததைக் கூறுகிறது. மல்லப்ப நாயக்கரின் உருவச்சிலையை கோயில் மண்டபத்துத் தூணில் இன்றும் காணலாம். ஆனந்த வருஷத்தில் (1614) ரகுனாத நாயக்கன் காலத்தில் - வடுகவகைத் தேவரடியாரில் அத்தகிரி மகன் முத்துவுக்கு, பெரியண்ணன் மண்டபத்தில் - சுவாமி விசைய ராகவ மாணிக்கம் என்று பெயர் கொடுத்துக் கௌரவித்தனர். அவளுக்கு முன்று காணி நிலம் மானியமாகவும் அளிக்கப்பட்டது. ராகுச வருடத்தில் (1616) ரகுனாத நாயக்கன் காலத்தில் மார்க்க காய பண்டிதர் என்னும் வைத்தியருக்கு மாதம் ஆறு பணமும், 150-குழி நிலமும் கொடுக்கப்பட்டது.

### கும்பகோணம்

17-ஆம் நூற்றாண்டின் முற்பகுதியில் விஜயநகரப் பேரரசில் வாரிசுப் போர் தொடங்கியது. உண்மையான வாரிசான இராமராய ருக்குத் தஞ்சை மன்னன் ரகுனாத நாயக்கன் பேருதவி செய்து-இராம ராயனைச் சிம்மாசனத்தில் அமர்த்தினான். இவ்வெற்றியின் நினை வாக கி.பி. 1620-இல் ரகுனாத நாயக்கன் கும்பகோணம் இராம ஸ்வாமி கோயிலைக் கட்டினான்.<sup>63</sup> இம்மன்னனின் உருவச்சிலையை இன்றும் குடந்தை இராமஸ்வாமி கோயிலுக்குள் காணலாம்.

### திருவங்கரணை

காஞ்சீபுரம் தாலுக்கா திருவங்கரணைக் கிராமத்தில் தென் கிழக்கில் ஒரு கிலோ மீட்டர் தூரத்தில் பாழடைந்த மண்டபம் ஒன்றை இன்றும் காணலாம். இதில் தெலுங்கிலும், தமிழிலும் எழுதப்பட்ட கல்வெட்டு ஒன்று உள்ளது. கல்வெட்டின் காலம் சகவருஷம் 1658 (கி.பி. 1736) ஆகும். திருவடி ராளிச் செட்டியார் என்பவர், கல்யாண மண்டபம் கட்டி, மலர்த்தோட்டம் அமைத்து திருக்குளமும் வெட்டி, சீதைக்கும் இராமருக்கும் திருவிழா எடுக்கவும் நிவந்தங்கள் கொடுத்தார் என்று கூறுகிறது. இக்கல்வெட்டு உள்ள மண்டபமே 1736-இல் கல்யாண மண்டபமாகத் திகழ்ந்தது. சீதை, இராமரின் உருவச்சிலை கள் இருந்தன. கால வெள்ளத்தில் இச்சிலைகள் மறைந்தன.

மண்டபம் பாழடைந்து விட்டது. கல்வெட்டு மட்டும் பழங் கதையைக்

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### முடிவுரை

இவ்வாய்வினை ஒரு சிறு வட்டத்திற்குள் அமைத்துள்ளேன். இதனை விரிவாக ஆய்ந்தால் பல இராமர் கோயில்களைப்பற்றி அறியலாம். இவ்வாய்வில் கொடுக்கப்பட்டுள்ள செய்திகள் சிலவே. பல செய்திகள் அனேக கல்வெட்டுக்களில் உள்ளன. இடமின்மையில் சுருக்க வேண்டிய நிலையில் உந்தப்பட்டேன். இராமர் கோயிலைப் பற்றிய விரிவான ஆய்வை தமிழ், கன்னடம், தெலுங்கு, வடமொழி மற்றும் பல மொழிக் கல்வெட்டுக்களிலும், விரிவாக ஆய்ந்தால்-பாரத தேசத்தில் இராமர் வழிபாடு எவ்வாறு எல்லாக்காலங்களிலும் எல்லா மக்களாலும் போற்றப்பட்டது என்பதை அறியலாம். இதனை வருங்காலம் செய்யும் என்ற நம்பிக்கையில் இவ்வாய்வினை இத்துடன்

ன்.

### குறிப்புகள்

- 1) S. I. I. XIV 17
- 2) 46 of 1923; A. R. Ep. 1922-23 page 102
- 3) 48 of 1923
- 4) 498 of 1920
- 5) 238 of 1927
- 6) 322 of 1910
- 7) S. I. I. VI 283 to 325 and 332 to 377; A. R. Ep. 163 to 197
- 8) S. I. I. VI 137 - lines 3 and 13
- 9) S. I. I. XIX 373 and 396; A. R. Ep. 192 of 1919
- 10) S. I. I. VI 297
- 11) 164 of 1923
- 12) 181 of 1923
- 13) 176 of 1923
- 14) 194 of 1923

- 15) 333 of 1917; A. R. Ep. 1918 page 145
- 16) Karandi copper plates of Rajendra Chola I-page 9 - K. G. Krishnan - Memoirs of the Archaeological survey of India No. 79 edition 1984
- 17) ஆழ்வார்கள் வழிக்குரவர் 1 சைவசித்தாந்தக்கழக வெளியீடு 1975
- 18) S. I. I. VI 33 line 98
- 19) 176 of 1919; A. R. Ep. 1919 page 96
- 20) N. Sethuraman - The Cholas page 51
- 21) S. I. I. VII 139
- 22) S. I. I. XXIV 57 and 63
- 23) 354 of 1921
- 24) S. I. I. XXIV 138
- 25) 81 to 87 of 1933-34
- 26) A. R. Ep. 1918 page 145
- 27) 341 of 1917 - I am thankful to Dr. K. V. Ramesh, Director of Epigraphy who was kind enough to send me the transcripts of this record and the one referred to in 28 below.
- 28) 262 of 1953
- 29) 263 of 1915
- 30) 244 to 249 of 1910
- 31) 237 to 242 of 1910
- 32) S. I. I. V. 991
- 33) 391 of 1922
- 34) S. I. I. VII 479
- 35) S. I. I. VII 477
- 36) 392 of 1922
- 37) S. I. I. XIV 226
- 38) S. I. I. V. 743 to 748 and A. R. Ep. 700 to 716 of 1916
- 39) E. I. V. page 43

- 40) S. I. I. V. 747
- 41) 705 and 706 of 1916
- 42) 707 of 1916
- 43) 704 of 1916
- 44) 645 to 650 of 1916
- 45) 645 of 1916
- 46) 684 of 1916
- 47) N. Sethuraman - Medieval Pandyas - pages 151 to 160
- 48) 541 and 556 of 1926
- 49) S. I. I. V. 446 line
- 50) 164 of 1916
- 51) 167 and 168 of 1916
- 52) S. I. I. VI. 455
- 53) Jatavarman Kulasekara Pandya II of accession 1237. My paper presented in the first session of the South Indian History congress - Madurai 1980
- 54) 163 and 180 of 1916
- 55) 163 to 219 of 1916
- 56) 175 of 1916
- 57) 356 of 1921
- 58) 355 of 1921
- 59) 256 of 1936-37
- 60) 257 of 1936-37
- 61) 71 to 76 of 1940-41
- 62) S. I. I. XVII 761 to 67
- 63) Sanskrit poem Ragunathabhyudam
- 64) 90 of 1923

# திருவாரூர் திருக்கோயில்

குடவரையில் பரலசுப்பிரமணியன்

தமிழகத்துத் திருக்கோயில்களிலேயே தலையாயதாகப் போற்றப் பெறும் பெருமை திருஆரூர் திருக்கோயிலுக்கே உரியதாகும். மகேந்திர பல்லவன் காலம் தொடங்கி, சோழர்கள், பாண்டியர்கள், விஜயநகர மன்னர்கள், தஞ்சை நாயக்கர்கள், மராத்தியர்கள் காலம் வரை மலர்ந்த கலைச் செல்வங்களையும், இலக்கியங்களையும், வரலாற்றுச் செய்திகளையும் தன்னுள் கொண்டு திகழும் ஆரூர் திருக்கோயிலின் தொன்மைச் சிறப்பு போற்றுதற்குரிய ஒன்றாம்.

மகேந்திர பல்லவனின் காலத்தில் வாழ்ந்த சமயக் குரவரான நாவுக்கரையர் தாம் யாத்த தேவாரப்பதிகத்தில் ‘‘அம்பலத்தே மன்னிக் கூத்தை ஆடுவான் புகுவதற்கு முன்னோ பின்னோ அணியாரூர் கோயிலாக் கொண்ட நாளே’’; ‘‘கோலம் நீ கொள்வதற்கு முன்னோ பின்னோ குளிராரூர் கோயிலாக் கொண்ட நாளே’’; ‘‘வேதத்தை விரிப்பதற்கு முன்னோ பின்னோ விழவாரூர் கோயிலாக் கொண்ட நாளே’’ —என வினவும் வினாக்களால் கி.பி. 6-ஆம் நூற்றாண்டுக்கு முன்பே ஆரூர் திருக்கோயில் திகழ்ந்த பாங்கை அறிய இயலுகிறது. மார்கழி ஆதிரைவிழா, பங்குனி உத்திரப் பெருநாள், வீதிவிடங்களின் திருவீதிபவனி போன்றவற்றைக் கண்குளிரக் கண்ட நாவுக்கரசர் ‘‘எந்த மாதவஞ்செய்தனை நெஞ்சமே’’ எனப் போற்றும் திறத்தாலும் ஆரூர் தொன்மைப் பெருமையோடு விழாவின்பெருமையையும் நன்கறிய இயலுகிறது.

பல்லவர்கள் காலத்தில்-ஆரூர் திரு மூலட்டானம் எனும் புற்றிடங் கொண்ட திருக்கோயிலும், அரநெறியாம் திருக்கோயிலும் ஆரூரின் திருக்கோயில்களாகத் திகழ்ந்தன. பின்பு கி. பி. 9-ஆம் நூற்றாண்டில் இவை தவிர சுந்தரரால் போற்றப்படும் பரவையுண்மண்டளியும் சிறப்புப் பெற்றது. சோழப் பெருமன்னர்கள் காலத்தில் பெரிய தளி (திருமூலட்டானம் எனும் பூங்கோயில்) அரநெறி, திருமண்டளி, உலகீச்சரம், பிரம்மீச்சரம், அருமொழி ஈச்சரம் எனும் திருக்கோயில்கள் திகழ்ந்ததைத் தஞ்சைப் பெருங்கோயில் கல்வெட்டுக் களும், இலக்கியங்களும் குறிக்கின்றன. பின்னர் விஜயநகர—நாயக்கர்கள், மராத்தியர்கள் காலத்தில் வன்மீகேசம் (திருமூலட்டானம்) அசலேசம் (அரநெறி), ஆடகேசம், அனந்தேசம், விஸ்வகள் மேசம், தியாகேசம் என்ற பெயர்களில் ஆரூர் திருக்கோயில்கள் குறிக்கப் பெறுகின்றது. இவற்றுள் திருமண்டளி எனும் திருக்கோயில் தவிர மற்ற அனைத்தும் தற்போது அருள்மிகு தியாகராஜர் திருக்கோயில்



என அழைக்கப்படும் பெருந்திருக்கோயில் வளாகத்துள்ளேயே அமைந்துள்ள பழம்பெரும் கோயில்களாகும்.

எண்ணிலாப் பழம்பெருமைகளோடு, ஏற்றமிகு சிற்பக்களஞ்சியத்தாலும், வளமை மிகு இலக்கிய வளத்தாலும், கவின்மிகு கட்டிடக்கலைச் சிறப்பாலும், காவியங்கள் பேசிடும் ஓவியங்களாலும், பண்ணும் பரதமும் பாங்குடன் வளர்த்ததாலும், எங்கும் காண இயலா ஏழிசைக் கருவிகளாலும், கடிதினில் காலம் காட்டும் கல்வெட்டுக்களாலும், செல்வச் செழுமைகாட்டும் செப்பேடுகளாலும், கலைமிகு செப்புத் திருமேனிகளாலும், ஆழித்தேரின் அழகுடைப் பாங்காலும் மகுடமெனத் திகழும் ஆரூர் திருக்கோயில், 1500 ஆண்டுகால தமிழனின் சமயப்பெருமை, கவின் கலைகளின் திறமை மற்றும் தமிழகக் கலாசார பண்பாட்டுக்கூறுகளின் தனித்தன்மையைக் காட்டும் பெட்டகம் என்றே கூறலாம்.

கவின்மிகு கட்டிடக்கலைச் சிறப்புகள்  
திருமூலட்டானமும் — அரநெறியும்

கி. பி. ஆறாம் நூற்றாண்டிலேயே சிறந்த கோயில்களாகத் திகழ்ந்த பூங்கோயில் எனும் ஆரூர் மூலட்டானமும், அரநெறியும் செங்கற்தளிகளாகத்தான் திகழ்ந்திருக்க வேண்டும், பின்னர் கி. பி. 9-10 ஆம் நூற்றாண்டுகளில்தான் கருங்கற்தளிகளாக இத்திருக்கோயில்கள் மாற்றம் பெற்றன. பூங்கோயில் எனும் புற்றிடங் கொண்ட ஈசரது திருக்கோயில் முதலாம் ஆதித்த சோழனால் மாற்றம் பெற்ற கற்றளியாகும். பீடம், உப்பீடம், கோஷ்டம் மற்றும் பொதிகை விமான அமைப்பு ஆகியவை அனைத்தும் முதலாம் ஆதித்த சோழனின் கலைப்பாங்கில் திகழ்கின்றன. கருவறை, அர்த்தமண்டபத்துடன் மட்டும் திகழ்ந்த ஆதித்தனின் பணிக்குப் பின்னால் வந்த சோழப்பெருமன்னர்கள் முகமண்டபமும், மகாமண்டபங்களும் எடுத்து விரிவு செய்தனர்.

அரநெறியாம் திருக்கோயில் செங்கற்தளியாக இருந்ததை சோழப் பேரரசி செம்பியன்மாதேவியார் கற்றளியாக மாற்றியமைத்ததை முதலாம் இராசராசனின் கல்வெட்டு கூறுகின்றது. இப்பேரரசியார் கருவறை, அர்த்த மண்டபப்பகுதியை எடுத்தபோதும், மகாமண்டபம் பின்னாளில்தான் எடுக்கப்பட்டதென்பதைக் கல்லெழுத்துக்கள் உறுதி செய்கின்றன. இத்திருக்கோயிலின் கருவறையின் கட்டிடப்பாங்கு செம்பியன் மாதேவியார் பாணி என கலை இயல் வல்லுநர்கள் கூறும் பாங்கில் (ஆதித்தன் கால கலை அம்சம் சற்று விரிவடைந்த நிலை) அமைந்துள்ளது. இவ்விரண்டு கருவறைப் பகுதிகளே இன்றுள்ள திருக்கோயிலின் தொன்மையான கட்டிடப் பகுதிகளாகும்.

## திருக்கோபுரங்கள்

“மறைநான்கும் கோபுரமாய் வான் கிழிக்கும் வாசலிது”-என முத்துக்கவிராயர் தியாகேசர் குறவஞ்சியிலும், மனுநீதிச் சோழராஜன் நாடகத்திலும் குறிப்பிடுவதைப் போலவே, வான்கிழிக்கும் வண்ணக் கோபுரங்களாக வெளிமதிலில் நான்கு பெரிய கோபுரங்களும், ஒரு சிறிய கோபுரமும் (கீழ்திசையில்) அணிசெய்கின்றன. இரண்டாம் மதிலை இரண்டு திருக்கோபுரங்களும் மூன்றாம் மதிலை அனுக்கள் திருக்கோபுரமும் அலங்கரிக்கின்றன. இவை ஒவ்வொன்றும் வரலாற்றில் பல்வேறு காலங்களின் கட்டிடக்கலைப் பணியின் எடுத்துக் காட்டுக்களாகத் திகழ்வதோடு, தனித்த வரலாற்று முத்திரைகளையும் சுமந்து நிற்பது சுவையான ஒன்றாம்.

### கிழக்கு இராஜகோபுரம்

மகாதுவாரம் என வாஸ்த்து நூல்கள் குறிப்பிடும் கிழக்கு இராஜ கோபுரம் ஆரூர் திருக்கோயிலின் முக்கிய திருவாயிலாகும். மகாதுவாரமான கிழக்கு வாயிலின் மேல்தளம் (முதல் தளம்) வரை முற்றிலும் கருங்கற் கட்டுமானமாகவும், இதற்குமேல் 6 பிரஸ்தளங்களும் ஏழு துவாரங்களும் உள்ளன. இவை அனைத்தும் சிகரம் உட்பட செங்கற் திருப்பணியாகும்.

உபபீடத்திலிருந்து முதல் தளம் வரை உள்ள கருங்கற்கட்டுமானம் 12-13ஆம் நூற்றாண்டின் சோழர்கால சிற்ப-கட்டிடக்கலையின் உயரிய எடுத்துக்காட்டாகத் திகழ்கிறது. கட்டிடக்கலைப்பாங்கு, கோஷ்டங்கள் பஞ்சரங்களின் அமைப்பு, கோஷ்டத்தில் தெய்வத்திருவுருவங்கள் நிர்மாணம் போன்ற கலை அம்சங்களில் இத்திருக்கோபுரம் திருபுவனம், தில்லை, திருஆனைக்கா போன்ற திருக்கோபுரங்களை ஒத்து திகழ்கின்றது. சிவபெருமானின் பல்வேறு கோலங்கள், எண்திசைக்குரிய தெய்வங்கள், வாயிற்காப்போர், ஆதித்தன், திருமால் போன்ற தெய்வத் திருவுருவங்களும் நாட்டியச் சிற்பங்களும், யாளி வரிசையின் எழிற்கோலமும் இத்திருக்கோபுரத்திற்குரிய சிறப்பு அம்சங்களாகும்.

கலை நயத்தால் இமயமெனத்திகழும் இந்த இராஜகோபுரம், சிறந்ததொரு வரலாற்றுப் பின்னணியையும் கொண்டு திகழ்வது குறிப்பிடத்தக்கதாகும்.

கி. பி. 1202-க்கு முன்பு சோழமாமன்னன் மூன்றாம் குலோத்துங்கனுக்கும், பாண்டிய மன்னன் சடையவர்மன் குலசேகரனுக்கும் பெரும் போர் நிகழ்ந்து பாண்டியன் புறமுதுகெய்தினன். சோழன்

“திரிபுவன வீரதேவன்” எனப் பட்டம் புனைந்து மதுரையில் வீராபிஷேகம், விஜயாபிஷேகம் செய்து கொண்டான். இதன் விளைவால் கிடைத்த பாண்டிநாட்டு கருவூலத்திலிருந்து கிடைத்த பசும்பொன் கொண்டு திரிபுவன வீரேச்சரம் எடுத்ததோடு திருவாரூர் வன்மீகனின் திருக்கோபுரமும் எடுத்தான். இதனைச் சிறைகொண்ட புனல் வையைச் சேரபாண்டியன் மண்டலத்து இறைகொண்ட பசும் பொன்னும் இறையிலியும் கொண்டு பைம்பொன் மதிள் திருவாரூர் வானவர்க்கு அளித்ததால் குலோத்துங்கனின் மெய்கீர்த்தி கூறுவதோடு, திருபுவனம் கிரந்தக் கல்வெட்டுப் பாடல்,

“வல் மீகீஸ்வர வேஸ்வதி நிகிலம்  
நிர்மாய ஹைமதே திரு போ  
வல்மீகாதி பதேஸ் வகார சபா  
திவ்யாம் மஹத் கோபுரம்”

என்று கூறி மதுரையம்பதியில் மன்னவன் கண்ட வெற்றியின் சின்னமாக ஆரூர் திருக்கோபுரம் எடுக்கப்பட்டதை விவரிக்கின்றது.

வரலாற்றுச் சிறப்புடைய இத்திருக்கோபுரத்தில் அமைந்துள்ள இரண்டு மாடங்களில் மாமன்னன் குலோத்துங்கன், அவனது இராஜகுரு ஈஸ்வர சிவர் எனும் சோமேஸ்வரர் ஆகிய இருவருடைய உருவச்சிலைகளும் கல்வெட்டுப் பொறிப்புகளோடு இன்றும் உள்ளன. கலை நயத்தால் மட்டுமின்றி வரலாற்றுப் பெருமையாலும் இத் திருக்கோபுரம் தன்னிகரிலாப் பெருமையோடு திகழ்கிறது.

கிழக்குக் கோபுரத்தினை ஒத்த மேற்குக் கோபுரம் கி.பி, 15 ஆம் நூற்றாண்டுக் கலைப்பாங்குடன் அமைந்துள்ளது. முதல் தளம்வரை கருங்கற்பணியாகத் திகழும் இக்கோபுர வாயிலின் இரண்டு பக்கங்களிலும் நாட்டிய மங்கையர் மற்றும் புராணச் சிற்பங்கள் இடம் பெற்றுள்ளன. கோஷ்ட தேவதைகள் இடம் பெறவில்லை. எந்த மன்னனின் பணி என்பதைக்காட்டும் தெளிந்த சான்றுகள் இதுவரைக் கிடைக்கவில்லை. இக்கோபுரத்தின் மேற்பகுதியில் காணப்படும் வண்ணச் சுதைச்சிற்பங்கள் கலைநயமிக்க நேர்த்தியானவை.

வடக்குக்கோபுரம் தஞ்சை நாயக்க மன்னன் செவ்வப்பன் காலத்தில் எடுக்கப்பட்டதாகும். கருங்கற்பணியாக முதல் தளம்வரை அமைந்துள்ள இத்திருக்கோபுரத்தில் சிற்பங்கள் இடம்பெறவில்லை. இக்கோபுரவாயிலின் கீழ்ப்புறத்தில் இரண்டு மாடங்களில் செவ்வப்ப நாயக்கனின் கருங்கற்சிலையும், அவனது காலத்தில் இத்திருக்கோயில் நிர்வாகத்தில் சிறப்பிடம் வகித்த பண்டாரத்தின் உருவச்சிலையும் இடம்பெற்றுள்ளன. செவ்வப்பநாயக்கனின் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் சில

இத்திருக்கோயிலில் இடம் பெற்றுள்ளன. தெற்கு மற்றும் வடகிழக்குத் திசைகளில் அமைந்துள்ள கோபுரங்கள் சற்றுச் சிறியனவாகப் பிற்காலப் பணிகளாகத் திகழ்கின்றன.

இரண்டாம் மதிலின் கிழக்குக் கோபுரம் சோழர் காலத்துப் பழமையான கோபுரமாகும். உயரம் குறைந்த கோபுரமாக இருப்பினும் குறிப்பிடத்தக்க சிற்பச்சிறப்புகள் இடம்பெறவில்லை. இதே மதிலின் மேற்கு வாயிலாகத் திகழும் மேற்கு இரண்டாம் கோபுரம் கருங்கற்பணியாகத் திகழ்கிறது. இதனை விஜயநகர மன்னர் இரண்டாம் தேவராயர் காலத்தில் (கி.பி. 1422-1446) தெட்சிண சமுத்திராதிபதி லக்கன்ன தன்ன நாயக்கன் என்பான் பெயரில் நாகராசர் என்பவர் எடுத்ததாக இக்கோபுரவாயிலில் அமைந்துள்ள தமிழ் மற்றும் கன்னட கல்வெட்டுக்கள் எடுத்தியம்புகின்றன. மூன்றாம் மதிலின் ஒரே வாயிலான அனுக்கள் திருவாயில் கோபுரம் சோழர்காலக் கட்டுமானமாகும். பலமுறை திருப்பணிகளுக்குட்பட்டதால் பல்வேறு பிற்கால கலை அம்சங்களையும் இக்கோபுரத்தில் காணலாம்.

புற்றிடங்கொண்ட பரமனின் பூங்கோயிலுக்கு இணையாக அமைந்துள்ள தியாகராசர் திருக்கோயில் மாமன்னன் முதலாம் இராசேந்திர சோழனால் அவனது உளம் கவர்ந்த நங்கை பரவை என்ற பெண்ணைங்கின் வேண்டுகோளுக்காக எடுக்கப்பட்ட கற்றளியாகும். இடைக்காலச் சோழர்களின் அழகிய கட்டிடப் பணியை இக்கற்றளியில் காணமுடிகிறது. நிலோத்பலாம்பாள் மற்றும் கமலாம்பாள் திருக்கோயில்களாகிய இரண்டு திருக்காமக் கோட்டங்களும் சோழர்களின் சீரிய படைப்புகளாயினும் பிற்காலத்திருப்பணிகளுக்குப் பலமுறை இலக்கானதால் பல்வேறு கலைநயங்களையும் இணைத்துச் சுவைக்க முடிகிறது.

#### திருமண்டபங்கள்

தேவாசிரியம் சுந்தரரால் திருத்தொண்டத்தொகை இயற்றப் பட்ட இப்புனித மண்டபத்தின் பெருமைகளைச் சேக்கிழார் திருத்தொண்டர் மாக்காதையில் சிறப்பாகப் பேசுகிறார். கி.பி. 9ஆம் நூற்றாண்டிலிருந்து திகழும் இம்மண்டபத்தில் பிற்காலச் சோழர்களின் கலை வண்ணமும் மிளிர்கின்றன. மிகப்பெரிய மண்டபமான தேவாச்சிரியம் கருங்கற்பணியாகவே அமைந்துள்ளது. ிடம், உப்பீடம், பத்மம், குமுதம் ஆகிய பகுதிகளுடன் திகழும் தளமும், எழில் மிகுந்த தூண்களும் இம்மண்டபத்தின் சிறப்பு அம்சங்களாகும்.

சைவ சமய வரலாற்றிலும் பல நிகழ்ச்சிகளுடன் தொடர்புடைய இம் மண்பம் கூத்தும், பரதமும் நிகழ்ந்த கலை அரங்கமாகவும்

திகழ்ந்திருக்கிறது. இவையன்றி இன்றும் தமிழகத்தின் சிறப்பான தொன்மை ஓவியக்கூடங்களில் இதுவும் ஒன்றாகத் திகழ்கிறது.

### இராஜநாராயணன் திருமண்டபம்

ஆரூர் திருக்கோயிலில் அமைந்துள்ள மண்டபங்களிலேயே மிகத் தொன்மையான அழகுடன் திகழ்வது இராஜநாராயணன் மண்டபமாகும். இம்மண்டபமும் பிற்காலத் திருப்பணிகளுக்குட்பட்டபோதும் பெரும்பகுதி பழமையின் எச்சங்களே. அனுக்கன் திருவாயிலுக்கு எதிராக அமைந்துள்ள இம்மண்டபம் கருங்கற்பணியாக, சிம்மத் தூண்கள் பெற்றுத் திகழ்கிறது. உத்திரத்தின் உள்விளிம்புகளில் நடனமாதர் தம் சிற்பங்களும் இடம் பெற்றுள்ளன.

கலை நயத்தால் சிறப்பிக்கப்படும் இம்மண்டபம் வரலாற்றுப் பெருமையும் சிறப்பும் உடையதாகும். சோழப் பெருமன்னர்கள் காலத்தில் ஆரூர் ஊர்ச்சபையினர் கூடும் பொது மன்றமாகவும் இம்மண்டபம் திகழ்ந்திருக்கின்றது. பல்வேறு ஊர்ச்சபையினரும், நாட்டவரும் கூடி சமுதாய முடிவுகளை எடுத்த பெருமன்றமாகவும் இம்மண்டபம் திகழ்ந்ததை அரிய கல்வெட்டொன்று எடுத்தியம்புகிறது. பங்குனி உத்திரப் பெருவிழாக்கள் மட்டுமின்றி ஆதிரை விழாவின் போதும் ஆரூர் அண்ணல் எழுந்தருளும் சிறப்புடை மண்டபமும் இதுவே.

### இராஜேந்திரசோழன் திருமண்டபம்

கடாரம் வென்ற பெருமன்னனின் உள்ளம் கவர்ந்த நங்கை நல்லாள் பரவை நங்கையின் வேண்டுகோளுக்கு இணங்கி மாமன்னனின் மைந்தன் முதலாம் இராஜாதிராஜன் எடுத்த பெருமண்டபமாக இதனைக் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் கூறுகின்றன. இது தற்போது சபாபதி மண்டபம் என்ற பெயரில் அழைக்கப்படும் மண்டபமாக இருக்கலாம் என ஊகம் கொள்ள இயலுகிறது. இம்மண்டபமும் பிற்காலத் திருப்பணிகளுக்கு இலக்கான ஒன்றே.

### சிற்பச்செழுமை:-

கலை அழகு மிளிரும் எண்ணிலாச் சிற்பங்களைச் சுமந்து நிற்கும் ஆரூர் திருக்கோயில் தமிழகத்துச் சிற்ப வளமைக்குச் சிறந்த எடுத்துக் காட்டான திருக்கோயிலாகும். கல்லில் கவின்மிகு சிற்பங்களைத் தமிழகம் கண்ட முதற் பொற்காலம் மகேந்திரபல்லவன் காலமாகும். இப்பெருமன்னன் காலத்தில் சோழமண்டலம் பல்லவனின் ஆளுகையின் கீழ் இருந்தது. புறச்சமயம் விடுத்துச் சைவம் தழுவிய இவ் வேந்தர் வேந்தன் காலத்திலும் இவனுக்குப் பின்னவர்கள் காலத்

திலும் பல திருக்கோயில்களில் எழில் மிகு சிற்பங்கள் இடம்பெற்றன. இவை “பல்லவகலைநயம்” எனக் குறிப்பிடப்படும் தனித்தன்மை பெற்றுத் திகழ்ந்தன. இத்தகைய கலைநயம் கொண்ட சிற்பங்களாக ஆரூர் திருக்கோயிலில் அன்னையர் எழுவர் (சப்த மாதர்கள்) கணபதி, மகேசன், துர்க்கை போன்ற சிற்பங்கள் இரண்டாம் திருச்சுற்றில் இடம் பெற்றுள்ளன. முதற்றிருச்சுற்றில் உள்ள யமசண்டீசர் என்ற பெயரில் உள்ள சிற்பம் தென் திசைக்காப்புக் கடவுளான இமயன் என்பதும், இது பல்லவர்கள்காலப்பாங்குடைச் சிற்பம் என்பதும் சிற்ப இயல் வல்லுநர்கள் மட்டுமே அறிந்த ஒன்று.

மேலைச் சாளுக்கிய மன்னனான இரண்டாம் புலிகேசியை அழித்து அவனது தலைநகரைக் கைப்பற்றி வரலாற்றில் முத்திரை பதித்தவர் பரஞ்சோதி எனும் பல்லவர் தளபதி. நரசிம்மப் பல்லவனின் தானைத் தளபதியான இவர் வாதாபி வெற்றியின் நினைவாக அங்கிருந்து வினாயகப்பெருமான் திருவுருவைக் கொண்டுவந்து சோழநாட்டில் வைத்ததாக வரலாற்றுச் சிறப்பு உண்டு. அவர் கொண்டுவந்த வினாயகர் அவரது சொந்த ஊரான திருச்செங்காட்டங்குடியில் பிரதிட்டை செய்ததாகவும், அல்லது திருவாரூரில் வைத்ததாகவும் இரண்டுவிதக் கருத்துக்கள் உண்டு. செங்காட்டாங்குடியில் “வாதாபி வினாயகர்” என்ற பெயரில் உள்ள பிள்ளையார் குலோத்துங்கன் காலத்திய சிற்பமாகும். ஆனால் திருவாரூரில் முதல் திருச்சுற்றில் இடம்பெற்றுள்ள “வாதாபி வினாயகர்” கலை அம்சத்தால் சாளுக்கிய கலை நெறியை முற்றிலும் ஒத்துத் திகழ்கிறது. சோழநாட்டில் பார்க்க இயலாத ஒருவகைப் புதுமைப்படைப்பே இச்சிற்பம். முத்து சுவாமி தீட்சிதர் அவர்கள் இயற்றிய “வாதாபி கணபதிம்” என்ற பாடல் இதை மூர்த்திக்கு முன்புதான் பாடப்பட்டது என்பதும் குறிப்பிடத் தக்கதாகும்.

புற்றிடங்கொண்ட பரமனின் கருவறையின் இருபுறமும் இரண்டு அழகிய வாயிற்காப்போர் சிலைகள் உள்ளன. முதல் ஆதித்தன் காலத்தின் நேர்த்தியான சிற்ப எழில் மிகுந்த படைப்புக்கள் இவை. இதே கருவறையின் நிலைப்படியின் மேல்விளிம்பில் கயிலை உறையும் நாதன் மணக்கோல நம்பியாகக் காட்சி நல்குகிறார். உமையவள் கரம்பற்றி, தேவர்கள் சூழத்திகழும் இச்சிற்பத் தொகுதி உயரிய சிறப்புடையதாகும். புற்றிடங்கொண்டார் திருக்கோயில் கருவறையின் வெளிப்புறம் பட்டிகைத் தொகுதியில் நுண்சிற்பங்கள் உள்ளன. முற்காலச் சோழர்களின் சிறப்புப் பணியான இவ்வகைச் சிற்பங்களில் ஆலிலைக் கண்ணன், வேழம் உரித்த வேதநாயகன் போன்ற சிற்பங்கள் கலைநயம் வாய்ந்தவை.

அரநெறியாம் திருக்கோயில் கோஷ்டங்களில் இடம் பெற்றுள்ள துர்க்கை, பலியாக உருப்பு அரிந்து தரும் வீரர்கள், கங்காளமூர்த்தி, உமையொருபாகன், இலிங்கோத்பவர், மன்னர்கள் திருவுருவங்கள், போன்றவை குறிப்பிடத்தகுந்த சிறப்பு வாய்ந்தவை. கும்பகோணம் கீழ்க்கோட்டம் (நாகேஸ்வரன்கோயில்) சீனிவாச நல்லூர் அரங்கநாதர் கோயில் போன்ற திருக்கோயில் சிற்பங்களை ஒத்த எழில்வாய்ந்த சிற்பங்கள் இவை என்பது சிற்ப வல்லுநர்களின் ஒருமித்த கருத்தாகும்.

கிழக்கு இராஜ கோபுரத்திலுள்ள சிற்பங்கள் அத்தனையும் முத்துக்களே. சிவபெருமானின் பல்வேறு கோலங்கள், உமை, மாலவன், எண்திசைக்காவலர், நாகராஜன், சூரியன் வாயிற்காவலர் போன்ற தெய்வத்திருவுருவங்கள் பிற்காலச் சோழர்கலையின் உன்னதப் படைப்புக்கள். தில்லையில் நாட்டிய மாதர்கள் சிற்பங்களும், தஞ்சையில் பரமனே ஆடும் தாண்டவக் கோலச் சிற்பங்களும், சுவரில் காணப்படும் அரை செதுக்குருவச் சிற்பங்களே. ஆனால் ஆரூர் திருக் கோயிலில் உள்ள எல்லா நடன மாதர் சிற்பங்களும், கர்ண முத்திரைகளின் அத்தனை வெளிப்பாடுகளையும் துல்லியமாகக் காட்டும் வண்ணம் முழுச்சிற்பங்களாக (முதுகுப்புறமும் தெரியும் வண்ணம்) செதுக்கப்பட்டு, பின்பே தேர்ப்பாவைகளை இணைப்பது போன்று கோபுரத்திலும், மண்டபங்களிலும் இணைத்துள்ளது, சிற்பக்கலையிலும், ஆடற்கலையிலும் அன்று ஆரூர் முழுமையாகப் பெற்ற ஓர் கேந்திரமாய்த் திகழ்ந்தது என்பதை நமக்குக் காட்டும் சான்றுகளாகவே நிற்கின்றன.

நீதி வழுவா சோழர்களின் பெருமைக்கு மனுச்சோழன் வரலாறு ஓர் எடுத்துக்காட்டு. சேக்கிழார் திருத்தொண்டர் மாக்கதையில் நகரப்பெருமை கூறும்போது இம் மன்னவனின் திறம் உரைக்கிறார். விக்கிரம சோழன் காலத்து ஆரூர் கல்வெட்டொன்று இக்காவியத்தின் பெருமையினை வரலாற்றோடு இணைத்துப் பேசுகிறது. இக் கல்வெட்டை இடம்பெறச் செய்த விக்கிரம சோழன் இக்காவியத்திற்கு கல்லில் வடிவம் கொடுத்தான். கல்லில் தேர் அமைத்து அதன் ஆழியில் கன்று சிக்கியுள்ள காட்சியையும், கன்றை இழந்த கோ, கொம்பால் மணி அடிக்கும் காட்சியையும் சிற்பங்களாக அமைத்தான். கல் தேரின் உட்புறம் விடை மீது சாய்ந்த வண்ணம் அமர்ந்துள்ள கயிலையம் பெருமான் மற்றும் உமையவள் அருகே ஓர் புறம் உயிர்பெற்று எழுந்த கன்றும் தாய்ப்பசுவும் நிற்க எதிர்ப் புறம் வணங்கிய நிலையில் மனுவேந்தன், அவன் மைந்தன் பிரிய விருத்தன், அவனது அமைச்சன் பாலையூரினன்னான் உபயகுலாமலன் ஆகியோர் நிற்கும் காட்சியும் இடம் பெற்றுள்ளது. தேரின் தூண்

ஒன்றில் ஆரூர் இறையவனைக் கரம்கூப்பித்தொழும் விக்கிரமசோழன், அவனது காலத்தில் வாழ்ந்து மாளிகையும் மனையும் பெற்ற உபய குலாமலனின் வழித்தோன்றலான சந்திரசேகரன் ஆதிவிடங்கள் எனும் பாலையூரினனின் சிற்பமும் வடிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளன. புராணத் தோடும் வரலாற்றோடும் பின்னிப்பிணைந்த அரிய சிற்பத்தொகுதி களாக இவை திகழ்கின்றன.

யோக நிலையில் அமர்ந்தவளாகக் கமலாம்பாளும், நின்ற கோலத்தில் அருகிருக்கும் தோழியின் தோளில் அமர்ந்துள்ள குழவி முருகனின் சிரம் தீண்டும் அருள் நங்கையாக நிலோத்பலாம்பாள் சிற்பமும் வடிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது புதுமையான படைப்புக்களாகும்.

தேவகண்மீசம் எனும் பிற்காலத் திருக்கோயில் தஞ்சை நாயக்கர்கள் காலச் சிற்பப் பள்ளியின் சிறந்த படைப்பாகும். மிக நுணுக்கமான வேலைப் பாடுகள் அமைந்துள்ள இச்சிறிய கற்றளியில் தேர்ச் சிற்பம் ஒன்று காட்டப்பட்டுள்ளது. தேரில் பசு ஒன்று நிற்க அதன் ஆழியில் மனிதன் உருவம் ஒன்று கிடப்பதுபோன்று வடிக்கப் பட்டுள்ளதும் நோக்குதற்குரியவொன்று.

ஆடகேசம் எனும் கோயிலின் பிறைமாடத்தில் இடம் பெற்றுள்ள இராஜேந்திர சோழன் பரவை நங்கை சிற்பம், கிழக்கு இராஜ கோபுரத்திலுள்ள முன்றாம் குலோத்துங்கன், ஈஸ்வரசிவர், வடக்கு வாயிலிலுள்ள செவ்வப்பன், அகோரபண்டாரம், ஆகியோருடைய படிமங்கள் வரலாற்று நாயக்கர்களின் உருவச்சிலைகளுக்குச் சிறந்த எடுத்துக்காட்டுக்களாகத் திகழ்கின்றன.

### சுண்ணாச்சுதைச் சிற்பங்கள்

மேலைக் கோபுரத்திலுள்ள பல தொகுதி சுண்ணாச்சுதைச் சிற்பங்களில் சிவபுராணக்கதைகளும் விஷ்ணு புராணக்கதைகளும் இடம் பெற்றுள்ளன. இவற்றுள் இக்கோபுரத்தின் தென் திசையில் இடம் பெற்றுள்ள சரபமூர்த்தி சிற்பம் குறிப்பிடத்தக்கதாகும். இரணியனின் ஆணவத்தைக் களைந்த நரசிம்மன், உதிரவெறியால் தேவர்களையே தாக்க முற்பட்டபோது கயிலயம்பதியோன் திருவருளால் அவரது அம்சமான வீரபத்திரர் சிம்புள் எனும் சரபவடிவமெடுத்து நரசிம்மத்தை அழித்தார். சரபோ உபநிஷத், சரபபுராண அடிப்படையில் அமைந்த சரபவடிவம் மிக அழகாக வடிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது. சிம்ம உடலும், சிறகு களும் கொண்டு சரபம் விண்ணிலிருந்து இறங்கி நரசிம்மத்தை அழிக்கும் காட்சி அரிய ஒன்று. கற்சிற்பங்களாலும், கலைமிகு சுதைகளாலும் ஆரூரின் பெருமை மேலும் விரிகின்றது.



## சிங்காதனத்து ஓவியங்கள்

வரலாற்றுக் கால ஓவியங்களைப் பெற்ற பாங்காலும் ஆரூர் திருக்கோயில் சிறந்ததொரு ஓவியக் கருவூலமாகத் திகழ்கிறது. கி.பி. 17ஆம் நூற்றாண்டில் சிங்காதனம் என்ற ஓவியன் தஞ்சை மராத்திய மன்னன் சகஜியின் ஆதரவால் இந்த அற்புதக் கலைக் கூடத்தைப் படைத்தான். இம்மண்டபத்துச் சுவர்களும், விதானங்களும் சிங்காதனத்தின் தூரிகையின் துணைகொண்டு வண்ணப் பொலிவு பெற்றன. மனுச்சோழனின் மாக்கதையும், முசுநந்த புராணமும் வண்ணக் கலவையால் பேசின. இம்மண்டபத்து வடபுறச்சுவரில் இடம் பெற்றிருந்த மனுநீதிச்சோழன் கதையின் வண்ண ஓவியத் தொகுப்பு காலவெள்ளத்தால் பொலிவிழந்து மங்கிவிட்டது. ஆனால் விதானத்தில் இடம் பெற்ற முசுநந்தன் கதை இன்றும் புதுப்பொலிவோடு திகழ்கிறது.

தமிழகத்தில் மலர்ந்த நாயக்கர்கள் கால ஓவியப் பாணியில் அமைந்த இந்த ஓவியத் தொகுப்பில் ஒவ்வொரு காட்சிக்கும் கீழ் அக்காட்சி பற்றிய விளக்கங்கள் தமிழில் எழுதப்பெற்றுள்ளன. இரண்டு இடங்களில் துவங்கும் முசுநந்த புராணத்தொகுப்பு இடையே சங்கமித்து, பின்பு புதியதொரு கதைத் திருப்பத்துடன் தொடர்கிறது. தேவர் உலகத்தில் நிகழ்ந்த வாரகலி அரகடன் சண்டை; இந்திரன் முசுநந்தன் துணை நாடல்; முசுநந்தன் துணையுடன் வெற்றி பெறுதல்; போன்ற காட்சிகள் ஒருபுறமும், திருமால் குழந்தைவேண்டியாகம் செய்தல்; சிவனருளால் சோமாஸ்கந்தர் திருமேனி பெறுதல்; திருமாலுக்கும் வாரகலி அசுரனுக்கும் சண்டைக்காட்சி; அரம்பையர் ஆடுதல் போன்ற காட்சிகள் தொடர்கின்றன. இந்திரனும் திருமாலும் சந்தித்தபின்பு சோமாஸ்கந்தர் திருமேனியை இந்திரன் பெறுதல் ஆகிய காட்சிகளை அடுத்து முதற் தொகுதியும் இரண்டாம் தொகுதியும் இணைந்து புதிய காட்சித் திருப்பம் காணப்படுகிறது. தேவர் உலகத்திற்குச் சென்ற முசுநந்தன் இந்திரனின் சூழ்ச்சியை வென்று தியாகராஜர் திருமேனியோடு ஆறுவிடங்கமூர்த்திகளையும் திருவாரூருக்கு எடுத்துவருதல், ஆரூரின் பத்துநாள் விழாக்காட்சிகள், திருக்கோயில் அமைப்பு, நகரின் முக்கிய மனிதர்கள், கூத்து மற்றும் இசை நிகழ்ச்சிகள், பரத அபிநயங்கள், வாண வேடிக்கைகள் போன்ற பல்வேறு காட்சிகள் இடம் பெற்றுள்ளன.

இவ்வோவியத்தொகுப்பு 17-ஆம் நூற்றாண்டில் ஆரூர் எவ்வாறு இருந்தது, எத்தனை விழாக்கள் நடந்தன, மக்களின் உடை, அணிகலன்கள் வாணவெடி செய்வதில் அவர்களின் திறன், நகரின் முக்கிய நபர்கள், கூத்துக்களின் வகைப்பாடுகள், இசைக்கருவிகள்

பற்றிய செய்திகள் ஆகிய அனைத்தையும் இன்று நம் கண் முன் நிறுத்தும் காலக்கண்ணாடியாகவே திகழ்கிறது. நாட்டியங்களின் பெயர்கள், வாணங்களின் பெயர்கள், இசைக்கருவிகளின் பெயர்கள், அதை இயக்கும் கலைஞர்களின் பெயர்கள், போர்ப்படை பற்றிய குறிப்புகள் முக்கிய மனிதர்களின் பெயர்கள் ஆகிய அனைத்தும் அந்த அந்த ஓவியங்களிலேயே 17-ஆம் நூற்றாண்டு எழுத்தமைதியில் எழுதப்பட்டுள்ளது நோக்குதற்குரியவொன்று.

அனைத்திலும் மகுடமாக இவ்வோவியன் தான்படைத்த ஓவியத் தொகுதியில் ஐந்து இடங்களில் தனது ஓவியத்தையும் எழுதி அதனருகே “இந்த சித்திரம் எழுதுகின்ற சித்திரவேலை சிங்காதனம் சதாசேவை” என்ற குறிப்பும் எழுதியுள்ளது புதுமையான ஒன்றாம்.

17-ஆம் நூற்றாண்டில் தமிழனின் ஓவியத்திறன், சமுதாயக் கூறுகள், புராண இயல் அறிவு, இசை, நாட்டியம் மற்றும் நுண்கலைகளின் செயல்பாடு, வாணவெடிகள் போன்றவை செய்வதில் இருந்த திறமை ஆகிய பல்வேறு துறைகளின் வெளிப்பாடுகளாகவே இக்கலைக்கூடம் திகழ்கிறது.

**ஆரூர் வளர்த்த ஆடற்கலை**

“ஆடரவக் கிண் கிணிக்கால் அன்னானோர் சேடனை  
ஆடுந்தீக் கூத்தனை நான்கண்ட தாருரே”

என நாவுக்கரசர் போற்றும் அண்ணல் ஆடுகின்ற ஆரூர்பதி தமிழக வரலாற்றில் ஆடற்கலையை வளர்த்த முக்கிய மையங்களுள் ஒன்று என்பதைச் சோழர்களது கல்வெட்டுக்களும், இலக்கியங்களும் மெய்ப்பிக்கின்றன.

தான் ஆடி உலகெலாம் மகிழ்வித்த ஆடல்வல்லான், ஆரூர் பதியில்தான் அமர்ந்து நடன நங்கையர் ஆடல்கண்டு மகிழ்ந்தான். இது உண்மையான வரலாறும் கூட. தியாகவினோதனாம் வீதிவிடங்கப் பெருமானின் திருமேனியை விழாக்காலங்களில் தேவாசிரிய மண்டபத்தில் எழுந்தருளச்செய்து அத்திருமேனி முன்பு தலைசிறந்த ஆடல் அணங்குகளை ஆடச்செய்து மன்னனும் மக்களும் போற்றினர். இதனை ஆரூர் திருக்கோயில் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் விரிவாகக் கூறுகின்றன.

விக்கிரம சோழனின் கல்வெட்டொன்று “திரிபுவன சக்ரவர்த்தி ஸ்ரீவிக்கிரம சோழதேவர்க்கு யாண்டு ஐந்தாவது மிதுன ஞாயிற்றும் பூர்வபட்சத்து சப்தமியும் ஞாயிற்றுக்கிழமையும் அத்தமுமான நாள்

முன்னூற்று நாற்பது கேயமாணிக்க வளநாட்டு திருவாரூர் கூற்றத்து திருவாரூர் உடையார் வீதிவிடங்கள் சித்திரைத் திங்கள் நதயநாளில் தேவாசிரியனாம் திருக்காவணத்தில் சிம்மாசனத்து எழுந்தருளியிருந்து பதியிலாளர் தியாகவிநோதத் தலைக்கோலியின் ஆட்டம் கண்டருளாநிற்ப....’’ என்று கூறுகிறது.

இதேபோன்று முதற் குலோத்துங்கனின் கல்வெட்டொன்று வீதிவிடங்க தேவர் தேவாசிரியத்தில் எழுந்தருளியிருந்து புக்கத்துறை வல்லவத் தலைக்கோலியின் ஆட்டம் கண்டு மகிழ்ந்ததாகவும், பிறிதொரு கல்வெட்டு இதே மண்டபத்தில் பூங்கோயில் நாயகத் தலைக்கோலியின் ஆட்டம் கண்டதாகவும் பெருமையோடு குறிப்பிடுகின்றன.

பதியிலார் எனும் ஆடலணங்குகள் இறைவனின் திருக்கோயிலில் ஆடல் புரிவதற்கென்றே தங்களை அர்ப்பணித்துக்கொண்டு, திருக்கோயில் அளிக்கும் பல உரிமைகளை அனுபவித்தனர். தலைக்கோலியர் என்பது தலைசிறந்த ஆடல் மகளிர்க்கு அளிக்கப்படும் விருதுப்பெயராகும். தலைக்கோல் பெறும் மரபை சிலம்பு விவரிக்கின்றது. பகைமன்னன் புறமுதுகிட்டு ஓடும்போது விட்டுச்செல்லும் வெண்கொற்றக்குடையின் காம்பிலிருந்து எடுக்கப்பட்ட கோலில் நவமணிகளும், பொன் வளையல்களும் பதித்து, சயந்தனாக அதனைப் போற்றி வழிபட்டு, மன்னனால் அளிக்கப்படும் இக்கோலே தலைக்கோல் என்பதாகும். இது ஆடற்கலையில் முற்றும் துறைபோகிய கலைஞர்க்கே அளிக்கப்படும் உயர் விருதாகும்.

இத்தகைய பெருமை மிகு விருதினைப்பெற்ற பல தலைக்கோலியர் பணிபுரிந்த திருக்கோயில் ஆரூர் திருக்கோயில். மாமன்னன் முதலாம் இராஜராஜன் தான் எடுப்பித்த தஞ்சைப் பெருங்கோயிலில் நானூற்று இருபது ஆடல் மகளிரை இக்கலை வளர்க்க நியமித்தான். இவ்வகையாக நியமிக்கப்பட்டத்தளிச்சேரி பெண்டிரின் ஊரும் பேரும் கல்லில் பொறித்தான். இவ்வாறு இம்மன்னவன் தஞ்சை திருக்கோயிலுக்காக சோழ மண்டலம் முழுவதிலிருந்துத் தேர்ந்தெடுத்த 420 மகளிரில் 51 பேர் திருவாரூர் திருக்கோயிலிலிருந்து தேர்ந்தெடுக்கப்பட்டவர்கள் என்பதை அறியும்போது ஆரூர் வளர்த்த இக்கலையின் பெருமை நன்கு விளங்கும்.

மேலும் ஆரூர் திருக்கோயிலில் ஆடற்பணி புரிந்த நங்கை ஒருத்தி திருமறைக்காட்டு ஈசனுக்கு நுந்தாவிளக்களித்து அதற்கென தொண்ணூறு ஆடுகளையும் வைத்த செய்தியினை மறைக்காட்டுக் கல்வெட்டொன்று கூறுகிறது.

இவ்வாறு சோழப் பெருமன்னர்கள் காலத்தில் ஆரூர் திருக் கோயிலில் ஆடற்கலை போற்றிப் பேணப்பட்டது என்பதும், ஆடற்-கலைஞர்களின் சமுதாய நிலை மிக்கோங்கி இருந்தது என்பதையும் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் சிறப்பாகக் கூறுகின்றன.

ஆடற்கலையின் நூற்றுஎட்டு கரணமுத்திரைகளையும் விளக்கும் சிற்பங்கள் கீழைத்திருக்கோபுரத்தில் மூன்றாம் குலோத்துங்கனால் எடுக்கப்பட்டது. சோழர்களுக்குப் பிறகு நாயக்கர்களும், மராத்தி யர்களும் இக்கலையைப் பேணினர் என்பதனைச் சிற்பங்களும், ஓவியங்களும், கல்வெட்டுக்களும் காட்டுகின்றன. மராத்தியமன்னன் சகஜி சங்கரபல்லக்கி சேவாபிரபந்தம் போன்ற பல நாட்டிய நூல்களை யாத்து ஆரூர் இறைவனுக்கு அர்ப்பணித்தான். ஆடற் கலை வளர்த்த பாங்கிலும் ஆரூரின் பெருமை அளவிடற்கரியதே.

**இசை வளர்த்த ஆரூர் :-**

ஆரூரின் சிறப்பு இசைக்கருவிகள் மூன்று. அவை பஞ்சமுக வாத்தியம் எனும் ஐம்முக முழவம், சுத்தமத்தளம், பாரிநாதஸ்வரம் என்பதாகும். குட பஞ்சமுகி எனும் பஞ்சமுகவாத்தியம் கி.பி. 12-ஆம் நூற்றாண்டில் சோழர் காலத்தில் - சோழமண்டலத்தில் மட்டுமே தோன்றிய தாளக்கருவி. இதனை யாமளதந்திரம் போற்றும் பார சைவர்களே இயக்குவர். முட்டுக்காரர் எனும் இம்மரபினர் சிவ பெருமானின் நிருத்தத்திற்காகவே இதனை இசைப்பர். இக்கருவி யின் ஐந்து முகங்களையும் சதாசிவனுடைய ஐந்து முகங்களாகப் போற்றுவர். சோழர்கள் காலத்தில் பலதிருக்கோயில்களில் இருந்த இந்தத் தாளக்கருவி இன்று அருகி மறைந்துவிட்டது. ஆரூரில் மட்டுமே காமிகாகம பூஜைகளுக்கும், விழாக்களுக்கும் மட்டுமே இசைக்கப்படுகிறது.

இதனை இயக்கும் ஒரே கலைஞர் சங்கரமூர்த்தி முட்டுக்காரர் என்பவர். இவரிடமுள்ள பாரசைவ உற்பத்தி - பஞ்சமுகவாத்ய லக்ஷணம் எனும் கிரந்தநூல் - இக்கருவி பற்றிய செய்திகளையும், பாரசைவர்களின் தீட்சை விதிகளையும் படி

இதனைப்போன்றே சுத்த மத்தளம் எனும் தாளக்கருவியும், பாரி நாதஸ்வரம் எனும் குழலும் தனிச்சிறப்பு வாய்ந்தவை. மிகப் பெரிய பாரி நாதஸ்வரத்தில் மரபு வழியைப்பேணி குறிப்பிட்ட இடங்களில் குறிப்பிட்ட பண்களையே வாசிக்கின்றனர்.

தனிச் சிறப்புடைய இசைக் கருவிகளைப் பெற்றதிருக்கோயிலாக மட்டி என்றி இசையின் அடிப்படையில் நூற்றுக்கு மேற்பட்ட இலக்

கியங்களைப் பண் மொழிகளில் மலரச்செய்த திருக்கோயில் ஆரூர் ஆகும். கர்நாடக இசையின் மும்மூர்த்திகள் எனும் தியாகைய்யர், முத்துசாமி தீட்சிதர், மற்றும் சியாமா சாஸ்திரிகள் பிறந்த ஊர் ஆரூர் என்பதோடல்லாமல் அவர்கள் போற்றிப்பரவியதும் ஆரூர் திருக்கோயிலையே என்பதும் சிறப்பு அம்சங்களாகும். ஆயிரத்திற்கும் மேற்பட்ட கிருதிகளை யாத்த தஞ்சை மன்னன் சகஜி மன்னன் தன்குலத் தெய்வமாகப் போற்றி பரவியதும் ஆரூர் தியாகராசரையே ஆகும்.

### இலக்கிய வளம்

இலக்கியம் வளர்த்த பாங்காலும் ஆரூர் திருக்கோயில் சிறப்பிடம் வகிக்கின்றது. தமிழ், வடமொழி, தெலுங்கு மற்றும் மராத்தி மொழிகளில் இதுவரை நூற்றுக்கும் மேற்பட்ட நூல்களை மலரச் செய்த பெருமை ஆரூர் திருக்கோயிலுக்கு மட்டுமே உரியது.

சைவத்திருமுறைகள் மட்டுமின்றி பல புராணங்கள், கோவை, பள்ளு, மணிமாலைகள், பிள்ளைத்தமிழ், குறவஞ்சி, துறைக்கோவை, அந்தாதி போன்ற பலவகைத் தமிழ் நூல்களும், புராணம், மான்மியம், கீர்த்தனம், அஷ்டகம் போன்ற வடமொழி, மராத்தி நூல்களும், பதம், நாடகம் ஆகிய அமைப்புகளில் தெலுங்கு நூல்களும் மலர்ந்தன. இந்நூல்கள் அனைத்தும் தியாகேசன் மற்றும் புற்றிடங்கொண்ட பரமனின் புகழைப்பேசும் நூல்களே. அண்மையில் கிடைத்த மனுநீதிச்சோழன் மகாராஜா நாடகம் எனும் தமிழ்இசை நாட்டியச் சுவடிநூல் ஆரூரின் பெருமைபேசும் அரிய நூலாகும்.

### செப்புத் திருமேனிகள்

நூற்றுக்கும் மேற்பட்ட செப்புத்திருமேனிகள் இத்திருக்கோயிலில் இடம்பெற்றுள்ளபோதும், இவை பெருமளவு பிற்காலத்தியவையாகும். அறுபத்துமூவர் திருமேனிகள் பெயர் பொறித்து காணப்படுகின்றன. சண்டேசர், சோமாஸ்கந்தர், வினாயகர் அமர்ந்த கோல உமையம்மை ஆகியவை முற்காலச் சோழர்களின் எழிற்படைப்புகளாகும். சோழர்கள், விஜயநகர மன்னர்கள், தஞ்சை நாயக்கர்கள், மராத்தியர்கள் கால கலைப்பாங்குடைய பல திருமேனிகள் இடம் பெற்றுள்ளன.

### செப்பேடுகளும் - ஓவியங்களும்

விஜயநகரப் பேரரசர்கள், நாயக்கர்கள் மற்றும் மராத்தியர்கள் காலச் செப்பேடுகள் பல ஆரூர் திருக்கோயிலிலும், சென்னை அருங்காட்சியகத்திலும் இடம் பெற்றுள்ளன. இவை அனைத்தும் நிவந்

தங்கள் பற்றிக் குறிப்பிடுவையாகும். தில்லைக்கோயிற்பற்றி பேசும் செப்பேடுகளும் உள்ளன.

இவற்றில் பெரும்பாலான செப்பேடுகளில் செப்பேட்டு ஒவியங்கள் உள்ளன. இவற்றில் குறிப்பிடத்தகுந்தவை சகஜி, முதலாம் சரபோஜி காலத்திய செப்பேடுகளாகும். சகஜிமன்னன் அவனது உடன் பிறப்புகள் இருவர் மற்றும் அருணாசலப்பண்டாரம் ஆகியோர் தியாகராஜப்பெருமான் முன்பு வணங்கிய வண்ணம் நிற்கும் காட்சி வடிக்கப்பட்டுள்ள செப்பேடும், சரபோஜி மன்னன் தில்லை நடராஜனையும், கோவிந்தராஜப்பெருமானையும் வணங்கும் காட்சி வடிக்கப்பட்டுள்ள செப்பேடும், செப்பேட்டு ஒவியக் கலையின் திறம்பேசும் சிறந்த செப்பேடுகளாகும்.

கல்வெட்டில் . ....

அரசியல் - சமுதாயப் பண்பாட்டுக்கூறுகள்

#### 1) முதலாம் இராஜேந்திரனும் பரவைநங்கையும்

கங்கை முதல் கடாரம் வரை வென்ற மாமன்னன் முதலாம் இராஜேந்திரனின் உள்ளங்கவர்ந்த நங்கை பரவை தன் இறுதிக் காலம்வரை தன்னையே ஆரூர் கோயிலுக்கு அர்ப்பணித்தாள். மாமன்னன் தனது பட்டமகிஷிக்குரிய இடத்தை இந்நங்கைக்கும் அளித்துச் சிறப்பித்தான். ஆரூர் திருக்கோயிலில் வீதிவிடங்கப் பெருமானின் கோயிலைக் கற்றளியாக்க விரும்பிய நங்கை பரவையின் வேண்டுகோள் மன்னனால் செயலாக்கப்பட்டது. மேலும் கற்றளிமேல் செம்பும், பொன்னும் போர்த்தப்பட்டது. முன்மண்டபங்களும், தூண்களும் செப்புத்தகடுகளால் எழிலுடன் செய்யப்பெற்றன. இக்கற்றளியின் மங்கலவிழ வன்று மாமன்னனும் நங்கைபரவையும் தேரில் அமர்ந்து திருவாரூர் வீதியில் பவனி வந்தனர். ஆரூரின் முன்பு இருவரும் நின்று வணங்கிய இடத்தில் “நிற்குமிடந்தெரியும் குத்துவிளக்கு ஒன்றும்” மன்னனது ஆணையால் வைக்கப்பட்டது.

“பச்சைப்பாவை உமைநங்கை—பாவை சரியா முலை நங்கை” என்ற பெயர்களில் இரண்டு குத்துவிளக்குகளும், எண்ணிலா அணிகலன்களும் நிலமும், நிவந்தங்களும் ஆரூரனுக்கு அளித்தார் அனுக்கியர் பரவைநங்கை. பரவைநங்கை மீதுகொண்ட அன்பால் மாமன்னன் பரவைபுரம் (பனையவரம் என்று விழுப்புரம் அருகிலுள்ள ஊர்) எனும் ஊரையும் பரவை ஈஸ்வரமுடைய மகாதேவர் திருக் கோயிலையும் எடுத்தான்.

இராஜேந்திர சோழனின் மறைவிற்குப் பின்பும் பரவையின் தொண்டு ஆரூரன் திருக்கோயிலில் தொடர்ந்தது. இந்நங்கையின் விருப்பத்திற்கேற்ப மன்னனின் மைந்தன் முதலாம் இராஜாதிராஜன் ஆரூர் திருக்கோயிலில் ஓர் பெருமண்டபம் எடுத்தான். அதற்கு “இராஜேந்திரசோழன் திருமண்டபம்” என பரவை நங்கையின் விருப்பப்படியே பெயரும் இட்டான்.

ஆரூர் திருக்கோயிலுக்கு மன்னர்கள் அளித்த அறக்கொடைகளை எல்லாம் மிஞ்சும் அளவு கொடை நல்கிய பெருமை நங்கை பரவைக்கே உரியதாகும்.

நங்கை பரவையும்—மாமன்னன் இராஜேந்திர சோழனும் இறைவனை வணங்கும் கோல கற்படிமம் எடுத்து அதற்குப் பூசனை நிவந்தங்களும் அளித்தனர் மன்னனின் மைந்தர்களான முதலாம் இராஜாதிராஜனும், இரண்டாம் இராஜேந்திரனும். இதனையொத்த படிமம் பரவைபுரத்திலும் எடுக்கப்பட்டது.

ஒரு பட்டமகிஷிக்குக் கிடைக்காத பெரும்பேரு நங்கை பரவைக்குக் கிடைத்தது. தனது உளம்கவர்ந்த நங்கையை மாமன்னன் போற்றியது வியப்பில்லை. ஆனால் மன்னனின் மைந்தர்கள்கூட சிலை எடுத்து அந்நங்கையை தெய்வமாகப் போற்றியது குறிப்பிடத் தக்கதாகும். தனது ஒழுக்கத்தால்—சீரிய தொண்டால் பரவைநங்கை பெற்றபேரு சோழர் வரலாற்றில் யாருக்கும் கிடைக்கவில்லை. இத்தனைச் செய்திகளும் ஆரூர் தியாகப்பெருமான் திருக்கோயில் கல்வெட்டுக்களிலும், பனையவரம் கல்வெட்டுக்களிலும் அழியாத உயர்காவியமாக இன்றும் திகழ்கின்றது. இராஜேந்திரன்—பரவை நங்கை படிமமும் ஆரூரில் திகழ்வது குறிப்பிடத்தக்கதாகும்.

## 2. மனுநீதிச்சோழனின் மரகரவியம்

சேக்கிழார் தம் திருத்தொண்டர் மாக்கதையில் குறிப்பிடும் மனுச் சோழனின் காவியம் சற்று விரிவாக, புதிய செய்திகள் பலசுமந்து ஆரூரில் கல்வெட்டாகத் திகழ்கின்றது. சேக்கிழாரின் காவியத்திற்கும் காலத்தால் முற்பட்ட இக்கல்வெட்டு விக்கிரம சோழன் காலத்தியது. இதில் மனுச்சோழனின் மகனது பெயர் பிரியவருத்தன் என்றும், மனுவின் அமைச்சரின் பெயர் பாலைபூரினன் உபயகுலாமலன் என்றும் குறிக்கப்பெற்றுள்ளது.

மேலும் உபயகுலாமலனின் வமிசத்தினனான பாலைபூர் உடையான் சந்திரசேகரன் ஆகி விடங்கனான குலோத்துங்க

சோழமாபலிவானாதிராயன் என்பவருக்கு விக்கிரமசோழன் அளித்த பரிசில்கள் பற்றி விளக்குகின்றது இக்கல்வெட்டு.

3, இரண்டாம் குலோத்துங்கனின் மனநிலை

ஆரூர் திருக்கோயிலில் உள்ள இரண்டாம் குலோத்துங்கனது கல்வெட்டுக்களை நோக்கும்போது இம்மன்னவன் சைவத்தின்பாலும் சேக்கிழார் திருத்தொண்டர் மாக்கதையிலும் செலுத்திய ஈடுபாடு நன்கு விளங்குகின்றது. இவனது துவக்க கால மெய்க்கீர்த்திகள் “பொற்கோட்டிமையப் பாவையும் சிவனும் போல்” என்று கூறி தன்னையும் தந்தேவியையும் நேராகவே சிவனுக்கும் உமையவனுக்கும் ஒப்பிடுகிறான். சேக்கிழாரால் சிவநெறியூட்டப்பட்டு சற்று மன முதிர்வு எய்திய நிலை வந்தவுடன் இவனது கல்வெட்டுக்கள் பொற்கோட்டு இமயப் பாவையுடன் வீற்றிருக்கும் சிவனருளால் சோழநாட்டைத்தான் தன் தேவியுடன் ஆட்சி புரிவதாகச் சொல்லிக் கொள்கிறான்.

பின்னர் சேக்கிழாரின் திருத்தொண்டர் மாக்காதை தில்லையில் இயற்றப்படுகிறது. கி.பி. 1139-40ல் இம்மாக்காதை யாக்கப் பெறும் போது சேக்கிழாரால் பெரிதும் மனமாற்றம் கொண்ட இம்மன்னவன் உடன் ஆரூர் சென்று மூவர் முதலியர்க்கு கோயில் எடுத்து, அனபாயநல்லூர் என்னும் ஊரைக் காணிக்கையாக்குகின்றான். இதனைக் குறிப்பிடும் கல்வெட்டில் தன்னை திருநடம்புரியும் சபாபதியின் திருவடிகளாகிய தாமரை மலரை மொய்க்கும் “வண்டு” என்று தன்னைக் கூறிக்கொள்கிறான்.

முதலில் சிவனுக்கு நிகரென கூறிக்கொண்டவன் பின்னர் அருளால் ஆள்வதாகக்கூறி இறுதியில் வண்டாகிய எளிய நிலைக்கு தன்னை கருதிக் கொள்ளும் மனப்பாங்கை ஆரூர் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் சிறப்பாகக் கூறுகின்றன.

சோழர்தம் நீதி—நிர்வாகம்

மனுச்சோழனின் மாக்காதை சோழர்தம் நீதிக்குச்சிறந்த எடுத்துக் காட்டாக இருந்தபோதும் பிற்காலச் சோழர்கள் காலத்தில் நிகழ்ந்த ஓர் நிகழ்ச்சி குறிப்பிடத்தக்கதாகும். விக்கிரமசோழன் காலத்தில் திருக்கோயில் ஊழியர்களுக்கு வீட்டுமனைகள் அளிக்கப்பட்டன. ஆனால் அந்த இடங்கள் விக்கிரமச்சோழனுக்குப் பின் வந்த இரண்டாம் குலோத்துங்கன் இரண்டாம் இராஜராஜன் காலத்தில் நகரத்து செட்டிகளாலும், செக்கார்களாலும் கைக்கொள்ளப்பட்டு அவர்களே அனுபவித்தனர்.



ஆலைய ஊழியர்கள் தங்கள் மனைகளை இழந்தது இரண்டாம் இராஜராஜன் காலத்தில் அம்மையப்பன் பல்லவராயன் என்ற அமைச்சரால் கண்டுபிடிக்கப்பட்டு, மன்னனது கவனத்திற்கு வந்தது. இதனை ஆராய்ந்த மன்னனும், அமைச்சரும் முன்னர் விக்கிரம சோழன் காலத்தில் அளிக்கப்பட்ட மனைகளை மீண்டும் ஊழியர்களுக்கு மீட்டுத்தந்ததோடு, அவர்கள் இதுவரை அனுபவிக்காமல் இருந்ததற்காக, சட்டவிரோதமாய் அனுபவித்தவர்களிடமிருந்து தண்டம் பெற்று அதனை ஈட்டுத்தொகையாக ஆலைய ஊழியர்களுக்கு அளித்தனன். மேலும் இருவரும் அவ்விடத்தை அனுபவித்து வந்த நகரத்தார்க்கும், செக்கார்க்கும் வேறு இடமும் உதவிகளும் செய்தது சோழர்களின் நீதி, நிர்வாகத்திற்குச் சிறந்த எடுத்துக் காட்டாகத் திகழ்கிறது.

சபையினர் செய்த முடிவு

ஆரூர் திருக்கோயில் மண்டபங்களில் ஊர்ச்சபையினர் மட்டுமின்றி, சுற்றுப்புறச் சபையினரும் கூடிப் பல சமுதாய முடிவுகளை எடுத்ததற்கான பல கல்வெட்டுச் சான்றுகள் உள்ளன. கி.பி. 12-13ம் நூற்றாண்டு எழுத்தமைதியில் வெட்டப்பட்டுள்ள சிறந்த கல்வெட்டொன்றில் ஆரூர் திருக்கோயிலில் பல ஊர்ச்சபை நிர்வாகிகளும் சான்றோர்களும் கூடிச் சமுதாயத்தில் திகழும் கலப்பின மக்கள் பற்றி முடிவெடுத்தனர். ஸ்மிருதி போன்ற நூல்களை மேற்கோள் காட்டி உயர்ந்த, தாழ்ந்த இனங்களின் கலப்பால் தோன்றிய மக்களை வகைப்படுத்தி அவர்கள் சமுதாயத்தில் கீழ்நிலையை அடையக்கூடாது என்ற நோக்கத்தால் அவர்களுக்கு அனைத்துச் சமுதாய உரிமைகளையும் அளித்துத் திருக்கோயில்களில் பலவிதமான பணிகள் புரிய நியமித்தனர். குறிப்பிட்ட ஒரு சமுதாயம் தாழாமல் நன்நிலைப்படுத்திய ஆரூர் சபையினர் எடுத்த முடிவு சோழர்காலச் சமுதாய நிலையைப்பற்றி அறிய சிறந்த ஒரு சான்று.

இதனையடுத்த பல நூற்றுக்கணக்கான செய்திகள் சோழர்கால அரசியல், சமுதாயம் மற்றும் பண்பாட்டுக்கூறுகளைத் தெளிவாகக் கூறும் சான்றுகளாக ஆரூர் திருக்கோயில் உள்ளது.

மூன்றாம் குலோத்துங்கனை ஆரூர் இறைவன்; “நம் தோழன்” என்றும் குறிப்பிடுதல் இறைவனே பேசுவதுபோன்று வெட்டப்பட்டுள்ள மன்னனது ஆணைகள், “திருபுவன வீரதேவன்” என்ற குலோத்துங்கனது விருதைக் குறிப்பிடும் முதல் கல்வெட்டு, சுந்தரருடைய தாயார் இசை ஞானியார் என்பவர் ஆரூரில் பிறந்த

வர் என்ற குறிப்பு, வேட்கோவர்கள் (குயவர்) கூட ஆரூர் கோயில் கணக்கு அதிகாரியாகப் பணிபுரிந்த சான்று, சோழ, பாண்டிய, விஜயநகர, நாயக்கர் மற்றும் மராத்திய அரசர்களின் ஆணைகள் போன்ற பலமுக்கிய செய்திகளை சுமார் 75 கல்வெட்டுக்கள் சுமந்து நிற்கின்றன.

சத்திரிய சிகாமணி வளநாட்டு திருவாரூர் கூற்றத்துத் திருவாரூர் திருக்கோயில் தமிழகத்துத் திருக்கோயில்களில் வரிசையில் தலையாய பெருமை உடையது என்பதில் ஐயமேயில்லை.

# **The Temples of Tirunelveli District**

**M. Senthil Selva Kumaran**

Tirunelveli District, although it may not reach the heights, has made substantial contribution towards temple architecture. It occupies a prominent role in the art of wooden carvings. The art of sculptures is quite appreciable inspite of being given lesser importance, compared to other places in Tamil Nadu. The art of paintings has been given only negligent attention.

The era between the 8th century A. D and 17th century A.D. marks the hallmark of temple architecture. In this district, only during these periods many temples were constructed by kings belonging to different dynasties, like Pandyas, Cholas, Chola Pandyas, Medieval Pandyas, Tenkasi Pandyas, Cheras and Nayaks. Most of the temples are situated on the banks of the river Tamraparni. Some of them are on the banks of tributaries like Haunman Nadhi, Chitra Nadhi, Pachaiyaru, Kadana Nadhi, Karuppa Nadhi and Chittaru. Some of them are built in the midst of towns and Villages.

The inscriptions which are found in most of the structural temples mention the name of the village and the name of the God. Kings had the habit of naming the God after their names. Many examples can be cited to elucidate this feature.

Raja Singeswara the God of Kottai Karungulam was named after Raja Simma Pandian III. Lord Vishnu the presiding deity at Mannarkoil is Christened after Rajendra I and the temple is called 'Rajendra Chola Vinnagar' Similarly He is called after 'Sundara Chola Pandya' as 'Sundara Chola Pandya Vinnagar Emberuman' at Kurumbur. The deity was later rechristened after 'Maravarma Sundara Pandya I. 'Srivallaba Eswaram', 'Chera Chola Pandyeswara mudaiyar', 'Kulasekhara-nayanar', 'Varkuna Vinnagar Emberuman', Katchi konda Pandeewarar, Kulasekhara vinnavar Emberuman', 'Srivallaba Vinnava Emberuman' are the names of deities that are named after the kings.

In some instances the name of the deity as referred to in the inscription is different from the one used by the people of the area. 'Vilvavaneswara' of Pattamadai is called 'Vallabhaeswara' in inscription. 'Palvannanatha' of Karivalam-vandanallur is called 'Kalānthesvara'. In most cases, however, the temples maintain the same name of the Lord as gleaned from inscription as exemplified by Pinakkarutha Mahadeva of Dharuhapuram, deity of Kottaikarungulam and also of 'Chandrasekhara mudaiyar' of Maramangalam.

As the Tradition goes, there are 108 holy shrines dedicated to Lord Vishnu. Out of them nine are situated in Tirunelveli District. These nine shrines are called the 'Navatirupatis' (nine holy shrines). In the whole of India there are eight shrines of Vishnu which are considered to be 'Swayambhu' in character and the temple at Nanguneri is one among them.

Tirunelveli and Courtallam are renowned for saivaite temples. The saivaite savant Thirugnanasambandar composed 10 hymns in praise of Nellaiappar and 20 hymns in praise of Thirukuttalanatha of Courtallam. The Vaishnavaites savant Nammalvar has sung in praise of Lord Vishnu at Srivaikuntam, Varagunamangai, Perungulam, Tirukkalur, Tenttirupperai, Tiruppulinkudi, Nanguneri, Tholaivilmangalam, Alwar Thirunagari and Thirukkurungudi. Besides Nammalvar, the Lord of Thirukkurungudi has been sung by Thirumalisai, Thirumangai and Perialvars.

Lord Nataraja is worshipped as the main deity in places like kattarimangalam, Karisulndamangalam, Karuvelangulam and Cheparai. These places housed the bronze idols of Lord Nataraja made by one sculptor. It is noteworthy that the family members of this particular sculptor are still earning their livelihood by continuing their traditional art.

Temples in Tirunelveli district can be broadly categorised into structural, monolithic and rockcut temples. Rockcut temples are found in places, like Malaiyadikurichi, Tirumalapuram, Veera Sikhamani, Kalugumalai, Chokkampatti, Sēdamaram, Ānandhaperi

Manappādu and Tiruchendur. Kalugumalai stands as the best example for these three types of temples. As far as the Monolithic temple is concerned, the style of Mahabalipuram is not followed here. The whole temple is made of one single rock which is separated from the parent rock. The facade, like the entire lower portion is roughly cut and unfinished. The central shrine is empty and unfinished. Now a modern image of Ganesa is placed in the Sanctum sanctorum. The Sikara of this temple, octagonal in shape, is the work of early Pandya Art. Albeit incomplete, it is famous for its sculptures. Sendamaram there is a characteristic early rockcut temple with heavy pillars. The central shrine housed Sivalinga on the panivatta. The rockcut temple in Ānandhaperi is incomplete and contains only one cell. The Thirumalapuram rock cut temple closely resembles Mahendravarma Pallavan's style. This temple comprises of a hall and a cell. The cell is flanked by dvarapālas. This temple acquires importance with its massive pillars and simple carving. The pilasters separating the sculptures on the main wall of the cave are decorated with lotus flowers. This temple represents the early phase of architecture in this area. Malaiyadikkurichi differs from other rock-cut temples of Tirunelveli district by having an inscription, which mentions the name of the builder.

More than hundred structural temples with inscriptions are constructed with black granite stone. Only a very few temples have their structures from Adhistana to Stupi in granite. The super structure of almost all the temple is made up of bricks and lime mortar. Tiruvaliswaram and Korkai Siva temples, Sandēsvara shrine in Tirupudāimaruthur and Srimulamahādēva shrine at Nellaiāppār temple complex are a few striking examples for full stone structure.

'Square', 'Rectangular', 'Octagonal' and 'Round' Sikharas are found in Tirunelveli District. Of these four types, the last mentioned round type dominates. The Central shrine of many temples are square in shape. Very few temples which are rectangular in shape are housing Lord Vishnu in reclining posture. Temples of Tiruppulingudi and Tirukkalur are the best examples for rectangular type of Central shrines. These types have Sala pattern of super structure.

Adhistanas are made in several patterns. In some places an additional basement has been added to raise the height of Adhistanas. These types of adhistanas are mainly constructed by later Tenkasi Pandyas. The same type of adistanas is found in temples of Courtallam, Sankarankoil, Attalanallur, Angamangalam and Kulasekhara Pattinam. Adhistanams are made according to the style of the wall. There are some references of folding type of adhistanas in accordance with folding type of wall. Some of the adhistanas are comprised of different varieties of parts. Most others are devoid of it.

In later Tenkasi Pandya temples and Nayakkar temples adhistanas have been built with changes in parts. Sankarankoil, Manappadai veedu and Cheval are standing instances of this type of adhistanam. The adhistanam of later Tenkasi Pandyas are made without proper parts. These types of adhistanam can be seen in Vinnavaemberumal Koil. Puliur oormel Alazhakiyan koil belongs to Tenkasi Pandyas. Most of the adhistanams are made of parts like Upana, Jagathi, Kumutha, Palakai, Vedikai. Tiruvaliswaram Temple adhistanam is decorated with yalifrieze, whereas that of Thiruvalluvar temple at Perungulam is designed with kabotha. Adhistanam kabotha is also decorated by 'niches' with human heads inside.

The walls of the temples are constructed in 2 types namely, plain types and folding types. Tiruvalluvar, Perungulam, Mannapadai veedu Courtallam, Attala Nellur, Erattai Thirupati, Darukapuram, Kalangadu, Tharavai and Cheval temples possess the folding type of wall.

This type of wall is found with simple decoration during early and medieval Pandya periods. Unlike this later Tenkasi Pandya and Nayaks, this type of walls is confined to several types Pilasters, Kumba Pancharas and Kostas. The foldings are called Needam, Kottam and Kudam. Either kumba Pancharas or kostas are found in the places of Needam. The dummy kostas are covered with salas or Maharas. In places like Athalanallur, Sankarankoil, Manappadai veedu, we can see salas on Kostas. Kostas with Maharas can be witnessed in temples like vanaramutti Seithunganallur, Marandhai and Kalugumalai. Ardhamantapa and Mahaman tapa of many temples are simply designed.

There is a clear vision of yali frieze, Swan frieze, Gaṇa frieze over and below of Kabotham. These types of friezes can be visualised in temples of Tiruvaliswaram, Kottaikarungulam and in temples built by Raja Rajan. In Vanaramutti, ganafrieze starts with Ganesa the leader of ganās. The kostas found in sikaras are not empty as kostas in the wall. They are housed with artistic stucco or stone sculptures of Indra, Narasimha, Brahma and Dashinamoorthy. Sikaras may be either single or double or treble storied buildings. Most of the temples are single storey sikaras. Tiruvaliswaram, Kottaikarungulam have 2 tiered sikaras.

In Tirunelveli district only minor importance is given to Gopuras. The Nellaiappar temple at Tirunelveli has Gopuras on all the four directions. Most of the temples have one or more than one in the eastern direction. Perumal temple at Alwarthirunagari has 2 Gopuras one in the east and the other in the west. The Gopura at Sankarankoil is perhaps the tallest Gopura in the district with nine tiers. Inscription of Tenkasi temple refers that it had nine tiered Gopuram. But now the superstructure is completely absent. There is the existence of only the stone structure. Palayamkotta Gopalaswamy Koil gopuram has been built by Nayaks with beautiful stucco figures. The biggest basement of gopuras without super structure are found in the places like Alwarthirunagari and Melacheval. The gopuras found in Tirunelveli and Tiruchendur temples are not decorated with sculptures whereas the gopuras at Alwarthirunagari, Thirukkurungudi and Srivaikundam temples are decorated with beautiful small divine sculptures and puranic sculptures. In Tenkasi the 2 tier basement having several kostas are embellished with various forms of Siva. Temples at Mannarkoil Tiruppulinkudi, Nattam, Dharukapuram, Karivalam-vandhanallur also have towers at entrances.

In big temples various mandapas have been constructed for specific purposes. The thousand pillared mandapa, which is considered to be the biggest is found in Tirunelveli Nellaiappar temple. In Nanguneri, Srivaikundam, Tenkasi, Krishnapuram and Cheval, Mandapas are supported by Yali pillars. Musical pillars are found at Nellaiappar temple and Alwarthirunagari. A pillar at Shenbagaramanallur has a hole

in it which when blown gives out the sound of a conch. A pillar in a form of a Gopura at Nellaiappar temple is an art piece of tourist attraction.

### **Temple and inscriptions**

It is a rare phenomenon to have inscriptions about temple construction as only a very few have inscription references to constructors' names. Yanaimalai Rock cut temple inscriptions in Vattelettu and granda script mention the name of the founder and the king. Pallavas did not give full details. But in most of the rock-cut temples they have referred only to names. Some temples do not have the inscriptions. So it is very difficult to find out the name of the architect who constructed the temple. Among the Rock - cut temples in Tirunelveli district only Malaiyadikurichi has inscriptions. At Kodumbalur, the king of Irukkuveli inscribed his name as well as the names of his wives, Karrali and Varaguramangai. Raja Rajan inscribed his name in Tanjore big temple.

Tenmalai Amman shrine and Pathamadaï Siva temple having inscriptions of Veerapandya and Jadavarma Kulasekhara I refer to the builders of the temples, Venavudaiyan and Emmanayan Irungotavan respectively. An inscription which is found in Pathamadaï temple also informs about a lady of Chola Kulānthaka Chatur Vēdimangalam as the constructor of sub shrine of Pillaiyar in the same temple. Fourth Regnal year inscriptions of Maravarman Sundara Pandya II in Tharruvai Siva temple as well as in perumal temple, record the construction of Valavalla Pandesvaramudaiyar temple and Ilaya Perumal Vinnagar Alwar temple at Kubakarāyanallur by Kubakarāyan. Cheval Siva temple inscription belongs to the period of Kollam 651 and mentions that the particular temple was destroyed and rebuilt by Kandankeralan. Kandankeralan renamed the village Cheval as Veerakeralanallur. Parakrama Pandya alias Kulasekhara deva built a temple for Siva and Perumal at Oormel Alagiyan. This matter is revealed in his 28th Regnal year inscription. The temples at Kurumbur Mārandai Mannapadaiveedu have in them inscriptions about the builders of the respective temples.



Parakrama Pandian had engraved a detailed inscription which provides information about the name of the constructor, year of construction of central shrine and allied shrines. It was inscribed on a pillar and placed in front of the temple. This enables all the people who visit the temple to see them. The kings who ruled after him followed this principle. The king Alagan Perumal Athiveera Rama Pandian has built a temple by the name of his father Kulasekharamudaiyar. These details have been inscribed at the bottom of the basement of this temple. When these types of inscription are not available we have to verify ancient inscriptions to determine the year of construction and name of the constructor.

In some temples during renovation the ancient inscriptions had been erased or misplaced. In some temples after the renovation, the renovator tried to re-inscribe the ancient inscriptions in the same style. This fact can be known from Courtrallam inscriptions, Mannapadaiveedu and Athanallur inscriptions. The Prakara of Courtrallam temple connotes the news that initially the matter was in 'vatta eluttu' and later on it was inscribed in (present day) Tamil. By reading the whole reinscribed inscriptions we can come to a conclusion that they have totally failed in their attempts.

In Tirukkulur a slab which carries Raja Raja's inscriptions was paved as the step for the kitchen. Temples at Srivaikundam, Manapadaiveedu and Sankarankoil have several fragment inscriptions over the compound walls and pavement. These temples were renovated during the period of Tenkasi Pandyas. Temples like Seithunganullur, Shenkottah, Karivalamvandanallur, Athoor, Murappa Nadu, Munangipatti, Nanguneri are thickly white washed and hence the inscriptions are not readable. In some temples the inscriptions have been effaced by Nature due to lack of proper maintenance. Maranmangalam can be cited as an example for this type. Some temples house some early sculptures. But they do not have inscriptions in coincidence with the date of sculptures. The main cause for this difference owes to destruction of earlier inscription during renovation. The sculptures found in central shrine of Nanguneri temple and Garudalvar of this temple belong to period of 8th century. But the earliest inscriptions, found in this temple is of Maravarman Sundara Pandya I. The same thing happened in Kottaikarungulam also where the sculpture belonging

to the period of early 9th century, are found inside the Prakara. But the available earliest inscription in this temple belongs to Raja Raja I. One incomplete Maran Jadai inscription is also found on the basement of this temple. These are all evidences for destruction of inscription during renovation. Newly constructed Dashinamoorthy shrine and big front mandapas are the common factor for hiding the existing inscription. The places like Melappavoor, newly constructed front mandapa of Pasuvandanai are hiding a portion of inscription. Even the kings who knew the importance of inscriptions allowed for the destructions. So we have to depend upon the architecture of prakaras and central shrine while determining the period of construction. This practice of destroying or erasing is mostly found in Tenkasi Pandya Periods. In places like Darukapuram, Tenkasi Pandyas renovated only the central shrine and left other places unaltered. Mahamandapa of Darukapuram temple belongs to 13th century. But the central shrine and Ardhmandapa were constructed by Tenkasi Pandyas. This is clear from the inscriptions of central shrine and Mahamandapa. So central shrine and Arthamandapa might have been constructed during 16th century and Mahamandapa constructed during 13th century. Sankarankoil stands out as the best example for complete renovation by Tenkasi Pandyas. The fragmented inscription circa 12th and 13th centuries indicate the existence of 13th century temple in Sankarankoil.

### **Wooden Carvings**

The art of Wooden Carvings occupies a predominant role in temples. Massive wooden door, cars and towers are decorated with fine wooden Carvings. Temples at Brahmadesam, Sankarankoil, Cheval and Kallidaikurichi possess ornamental, giant wooden doors embellished with beautiful figures. Each square of Sankarankoil door is designed as palanguin with pillars on either sides. To give more enhancement metal knobs in the shape of lotus buds are fixed on doors. Doors depict wooden sculptures of deities and dancing girls. 68 squares have been carved upon these doors. The entrance of tower possesses an inscription which mentions "Thiruvettai Kalingarayan Satha Sevai."

From this inscription it seems that this Thiruvettaikalingarayan must be the donor of this door. The door of Brahmadesa also possesses enchanting wooden carvings. In Karivalamvandhanallur the doors in the first and second entrance, we can have a vision of wooden carvings. The carvings represent Gods, dancing girls, dancing men, gypsies etc. This door belongs to the period 18th century. Vasudevanallur entrance doors have got 18 wooden sculptures. In the same manner Kutralam Chitra Saba entrance doors have wooden carvings. Thirty two squares have been carved in the entrance doors of Panboli temple. The doors of Thentirupperai, Srivaikuntam exhibit the various postures of Vishnu of Nava Thiruppathi. The door of Srivaikuntam temple has fifty squares. Nanguneri and Srivaikuntam Mannarkoil entrance doors are decorated with wooden figures. Most of the figures represent various postures and incarnations of Vishnu. The entrance door of Kallidaikurichi temple has got fifty six squares housed with wooden figures. Pitchadanar, Lingothpawar, Pillaiyar, Rishapha Vahanar and Anaikku Arul Cheitha Piran are the key figures. In one square we can see 3 portraits with moustache and turban. These persons might be responsible for making the doors. An inscription found behind these portraits conveys the year and the name of the donor. From this inscription it is known that this door might have been made by Selvakuru Ambalam in the year Kollam 900 (1765 A.D.).

As far as the wooden doors are concerned one of the squares embellished the portraits of the donor. Portraits are visible in the doors of Tirunelveli, Mannarkoil, Kallidaikurichi and Sankarankoil temples. The doors which were made during 15th and 16th centuries gave importance only to the figures of the deities. The doors belong to the periods of 17th and 18th centuries concentrated on erratic wooden figures.

Not only the doors but also roofs of some temples paid attention to the decoration of wooden carvings. Tirunelveli and Courtallam temple entrance roofs are decorated with figures of deities, dancing girls and musicians.

The inner portion of towers is made up of wood and is supported by pillars. These pillars are decorated with wooden figures.

Mannarkoil tower depicts the dancing girl. At Mannarkoil the roof of front mandapa of second central shrine is decorated with sculptures.

In Sankarankoil one hall is fully made up of wood and enchanting wooden sculptures. This room is called as Nerkattusevai Pulidevar room. The decoration consists of Dvarapala, Veerabatira, Mohini, Horse-rider, Vinayagar, Mummoorthy and Ulagalandtha Perumal etc. This pattern of design is the concrete example for 18th century wooden carvings. Most of the cars bear the erratic images. Nellaiappar temple car is the biggest of all the cars in Tirunelveli district. The shape of the car is square. This particular temple itself owns five cars. All of them are in good condition. The car of Alvar Thirunagari is round in shape which holds several wooden figures. The places like Karivalamvandanallur, Kallidaikurichi, Tenkasi, Srivaikundam, Tirukkalūr, Courtrallam, Sankarankoil, Murappanadu and Ambasamuthram have cars. Out of these only very few are in running condition.

**Sculptures :** In this district, only a limited number of temples have given importance to sculptures. At Kalungumalai the Pandya architects and sculptors found a whole hill, a monolithic rock which reminds us of the beautiful Siva temple at Ellora. The sculptor has paid special attention to the arrangement of curls and jatas on the heads of the ganas. There are four well finished figures just below Vimana top, of Siva and Parvathi, Takshina-murti, seated Narasimha and Brahma on lotus. Besides temples at Veera Sigamani and Thirumalapuram, are the Rock-cut temples. The Dvarapalas in these temples resemble the Pallava sculptures. Ganapathi, Vishnu and Nataraja in these caves set an example for early Pandian art. Ukkirankottai Sokka Nachiyar temple can be cited as an example for the sculpture of 9th and 10th centuries. Here we can see the inscription of Cholan Thalai Konda Veera-pandyan. The statues made during his period are Saptamatrikas, Vishnu, Durgai and Mahishasuramardhini. Chokkalinga Swamy temple in the same place has got Vishnu figure of 9th century and 5 feet Pillaiyar of 8th century. Pillaiyar of 9th century and Shandeesvarar of 10th century are found at Kallidaikurichi Siva temple. Dakshinamurti of 9th century and Aiyanar of 10th century are seen at Kottaikarungulam temple. The seated Aiyanar rests

his right hand on right knee and left hand on his left knee, Jadamandalam adorns his head. The Marvellous images of dvarapalas are four in Nellaiappar temple and Athalanallur temple. The crowns of Dvarapalas at Athalanallur, are surmounted with beautiful conch and wheel. These Dwarapalas are outstanding examples for the great work of early Pandian art. The Sikara of Tiruvalisvaram temple has got different forms of Lord Siva and Thikpalas. Parakrama Pandian of Tenkasi built two stone structured talas with several kostas filled with several forms of Siva sculptures. These sculptures represent 16th century Pandyan art of sculpture. In Kulasekharamudaiyar temple at Tenkasi, instead of placing figures inside the Nicher, the figures are carved in the walls of the tower. Srivaikundam temple and Tirukkurungudi Gopuras shrine with images of Vishnu and Thikpalas. Tirukkurungudi provides us the information that even in 16th century there were great sculptors in Tirunelveli district. Krishna in the midst of Gopikas, Suriyan on the single wheeled chariot animals like elephants, horses, several women figures made by the sculptures are noteworthy. Below the ceiling of mandapa of Vishnu temples sculptures of seated, standing and reclining poses of Vishnu are placed. East prakara of Nanguneri temple has sculptures of different deities and dancing girls. Parakrama Pandya of Tenkasi constructed a big mantapa in front of main shrine supported by huge pillars with life size sculptures of Manmatha, Rathi, Veerabatra etc. This method of construction has been followed in places like Krishnapuram, Karivelankulam, Srivaikundam, Nanguneri, Nellaiappar temple, Kutralam Chitra Saba and Thirukkurunkudi. Tenkasi temple is completely different from the above temples by having original forms of deities. The impact of Kerala culture can be found from mantapa sculptures of Karivalankulam, Thirukkurunkudi and Nanguneri. The scene which depicts the fight between Purusha Miruga and Beema can be visualised. The dresses and hair-do of dancing ladies and gents represent the costume of Kathakali. In Srivaikundam we can see real life like figures of women with Todday-pots, women with cradles having babies at their breasts.

**Paintings:** Not much importance is given to the art of paintings in this district. The rock-cut temple at Tirumalapuram has paintings on the roof of mantapa and the walls. These paintings belong to the period of Pandyas. The painting representing

the ganas found in the centre of the ceiling affords a good picture. The patrakuntalas on the ears of the ganas resemble those at Ajanta and Sittanavasal. The flowered robes that cover the bodies of the men in the group, painted on the side panel of the capital of the pilaster strike a strange note. Among the figures of dancing ganas on the ceiling the drummer has his head bent and reminds us of a figure in the Big Temple at Thanjavur. The painting of a fierce lion shows the interest in the study of mood of animals. The figure of heavenly-being riding a lion is painted on the ceiling near the panel of Brahma. The prakara of Srivaikundam Perumal koil depicts varieties of poses of Vishnu. These paintings depict various forms of perumal. They are painted in colours like yellow, green and brown. A marvellous painting of Narasimha is seen on the top. In the second prakara of this temple there is four pillared mantapa. On the ceiling of this mantapa we can have a vision of many poses of Permal of Naran-tirupati. Explanations are provided in Tamil and Telugu underneath. The paintings found in prakara are bigger in size compared to paintings on ceiling of mantapa. In course of time these paintings have started fading. The paintings at Alvarthirunagari depict the life of Nammalvar Udayalvar.

The Gopura in Tiruppudaimarudur temple is in five tiers. Each one of them is a storehouse of paintings. The paintings are on the walls as well as on the capitals of wooden pillars. The illustrative or pictorial panorama relating to the late 16th century, Black, Yellow, Green and White colours had been used. The events that are illustrated in the first tier are that of the miracles of Sambandar at Madurai. Large paintings of Narasimha, Nataraja and Ganesa on the one hand, a Chinese talking to a native and Arab ships carrying horses on the other hand, are depicted in the second tier. The wedding function of Goddess Meenakshi and Sundareswar at Madurai is depicted in the third tier. The fourth tier displays sequences of Valli's birth, Lord Muruga's attempts to entice Srivalli and blessings showered on Valli.

The fifth tier portrays paintings mostly damaged by white-washing. Besides some floral designs, the figure of dancing Kali and Ardhanarisvara are worthy of note. At Idaikal paintings are on the walls as well as on the ceilings of gopuras. The paintings stand for pond filled with lotus flowers, Pitchadanar and Somaskanda are especially noteworthy.

# **Kanyākumari Temple**

**Dr. S. Prathap Singh,**

1. Introduction : From very ancient days temples have played an important role in the life of the people. A study of temples help us to know about the services rendered by temples, development of fine arts, social life of the people, history of the land etc.

1.1. Title of The paper : The title of the paper is 'Kanyākumari Temple'. Kanni means virgin. Kumari denotes a particular stage of a woman. This title 'Kanyākumari Temple' means that the temple in which Goddess Kanyākumari is worshipped.

1.2. Aim of The paper : Kanyākumari is the land's end of India. From time immemorial this place is considered to be one of the five sacred places (Panchanari Tirtas) of Hindus. This place is twelve miles south east of Nāgercōil, the headquarters of Kanyākumari District of Tamilnād. This is the only place from where one can see sun rise and sun set on full moon days.

On the southern corner of this place where the three seas namely Arabian sea, Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal meet, the temple of Goddess Kanyākumari is situated. Goddess Kanyākumari is being worshipped from very early days even before the birth of Christ. The three Tamil kings, Chēra. Cōla and Pāndya, worshipped Devi Kanyākumari. The Goddess has shown divine path to Swami Vivekananda who has proclaimed India's culture to the whole world. Mahatma Gandhi, the 'Father of our Nation' has revered Devi Kanyākumari. The name of the deity is so popular that the town and the district are known only by the name. Every day thousands of pilgrims from all over the world visit Kanyākumari temple. This paper tries to trace the history and importance of this ancient and famous temple,

## 2. Origin And Development

2.1. Temple of Mortar : There is a sloga in Taitria Upanishad (about 6th century B.C.) about Devi Kanyākumari.<sup>1</sup> Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, an ancient travel document of first century A.D. speaks about the Goddess of Kanyākumari.<sup>2</sup> The worship of Devi Kumari is referred to in "Silappatikaram" and "Manimekalai", the ancient epics of Tamilnad.<sup>3</sup> From the above it can be inferred that there must have been a permanent temple for the Goddess of Kanyākumari between 6th century B.C. and the ancient Tamil Epic period (about second to third century A.D.). But there is no historic evidence to find out the structure of the temple during the period. As the temples during the period were constructed only by mortar it can be inferred that Kanyākumari temple during that period might have been constructed only by mortar.

2.2. Temple in Stone (Kattali) : The oldest inscription found in kanyākumari temple is that of Māran Catayan, a Pāndya king who might have ruled during 765 and 815 A.D. The inscription describes Devi Kumari as 'Kanyāpatārī'.<sup>4</sup> Dr. Nagasamy points out that stone temples came in to existence in South India only during the period of Rājasimha (691-726 A.D.).<sup>5</sup> So it can be inferred that Maran Catayan might have constructed the stone temple of Devi Kanyākumari on the model of the stone temples of Rājasimha.

2.2.1. Renovation Of The Stone Temple : Six inscriptions of Rāja Rāja Cōla (A.D. 985-1014) are found in Kanyākumari. Rāja Rāja the Great might have renovated the temple. During his period the temple might be having the simple structure of Garbagrahā, Arta Mandapā and one Tiru Chuttu. At present only a few pillars of Rāja Rāja's period are found in the temple.

As inscriptions of Vīrarājēndrā Cōla (A. D. 1062/63-1069) are found in the six pillars of the Mani mandapa it can be inferred that the Mani mandapa might have been constructed by Vīrarājēndrā Cōla.

The existing Garbagraha and Arta mandapa might have been renovated during 14th and 15th century A. D. in the Pāndya style.



The style and the sculptures of the Sabhā mandapā show that it might have been constructed during the period of Vijayanagar kings (A.D. 1350-1600).

3. Historical Background : The relationship between the temple and the administrators of the land is described in this portion.

Kanyākumari temple was under the sway of various kings of chieftains.

3. 1. Āi Kings : Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (A.D. 81-96) refers to Kanyākumari as a harbour and states that land from Kanyākumari to Korkai was under the control of Pāndya Kings<sup>6</sup>.

tolemy who had compiled his geography in A. D. 140 stated that to the south of Chēra kingdom the Āis ruled from Maicinda to Komari and past komari Pāndya country lay<sup>7</sup>.

From the above data it can be inferred that Kumari which was under the control of Pāndyas came under the control of Āis during A. D. 96 to 140.

Karunantaṭakkan was an Āi king who ruled between A. D. 857 and 890. He was popularly known as Sri Vallaba<sup>8</sup>. As the Cālai (educational institution) at Kanyākumari was known as Sri Vallaba Peruñcālai<sup>9</sup> it might have been constructed by karunantaṭakkan and Kanyākumari and its surroundings might have been under the control of this Āi King.

### 3. 2 Pandya Kings

3.2.1. Early Pāndyas : From Periplus or the Erythraean Sea it is understood that Kumari was under the control of Pāndyas during first century A. D. <sup>10</sup>

Silappatikāram glorifies Pāndya king as 'Kumari Cērpan<sup>11</sup>.

From the above data it can be inferred that Kumari was under the control of the early Pāndyas for fairly long period.

3.2.2. Later Pāndyas : During the period of Māran Catayan (A. D. 765-815) Kanyākumari was under the control of Pāndyas.<sup>12</sup>

As a feudatory of Cōla kings Parāntaka Pāndya was ruling the area of Kanyākumari during 12th century A. D. His two inscriptions at Kanyākumari temple shows that he had endowed Puratāya Nadu to the temple for feeding pilgrims who visited the temple on the day next to Tai pūsam.<sup>13</sup>

3. 3. Cōla Kings: Majority of the inscriptions Kanyākumari temple belong to later Cōla kings. This shows clearly that Kanyākumari and its surrounding areas were under the control of later Cōlas for centuries.

From the Cōla inscriptions of Kanyākumari some details about later Cōla kings like Vijāyalaya, Ātitya Varman, Parāntaka I, Arintāma, Parāntaka II, Rāja Rāja I, Rājendrā I, Rajātirājā I, Rājendrā II, Vīrarājendrā and Kulōtungā III are known.

Only with the help of Vīrarājendrā's inscriptions at Kanyākumari temple the following details are known.

1. Ātitya killed the Pallavā king in the battle field.
2. Parāntakā I endowed Braḥmatēyās like Virarayana to brahmins.
3. Rājendrā I had three sons namely Rājātirāja, Rājendra II, and Vīrarājendra and the three came to the throne in succession.
4. Vīrarājendrā donated large areas of land in Nattirākuṭi and Peruākuṭi kīlkombu in Purattāya Nādu for the daily pūjās of Kanyākumari temple.<sup>14</sup>

3. 4. Venad King: From the inscription of Udaya Mārtāṇṭha Varmā (A.D. 1515-45) at Kanyākumari temple the following informations are gathered.

Many parts of Tinneveli District were under the control of the King. He had a palace at Kalakāṭ, a village in modern Tinneveli District of Tamilnād. The king had donated paddy fields in Nāngil Nād for the early morning worship of Kanyākumari temple.<sup>15</sup>

3. 5. Vijayanagar Kings : The names of Vijayanagar Kings such as Vīra Narasimha, Achutarāyā, Rengarāyā and Rāmarāyā are ment-

ioned in the inscription of the flag mast of the temple.<sup>16</sup> From this inscription it can be inferred that the above Vijayanagar Kings had control over the area in which Kanyākumari temple is situated.

3. 6. Nāyak King: The inscription of Muthu Vērappa Nāyaki in the temple describes his endowment of land to the temple for the expenditure of the Kāla santi pūja. From this inscription it is inferred that Kanyākumari and its nearby areas were under the control of Nāik Kings during A. D. 1607.<sup>17</sup>

3. 7. Travancore Kings: During the reign of Travancore kings the administration of Kanyākumari temple was under the direct control of the kings.

3. 7. 1. Rāmavarma Kārtikai Tirunal (A.D.1758—1798): Copper plate of the king describes his donation for the making of Sribali statue, painting some portions of the temple, daily worship and some repairs of the temple. The copper plate also refers to the auditing of the temple accounts by the king.<sup>18</sup>

3. 7. 2. Gowri LekshmiBāi (A.D. 1811-15): In the year A.D. 1812 this queen nationalised all the properties of the temple. That year 75,062 panam<sup>19</sup> was given to the temple for its expenditure.<sup>20</sup>

3. 7. 3. Sri Mūlam Tirunal (A.D. 1885—1924): This king brought forth the Devaswam Proclamation in 1922. According to this proclamation the temple administration was controlled by a separate government department named Devaswam Department.<sup>21</sup>

3. 7. 4. Setu Lekshmibāi (A.D.1924—32): This queen stopped animal sacrifice and devadasi<sup>22</sup> system in temples<sup>23</sup>

3. 7. 5. Cittirai Tirunāl: (1932—47): This king put forth the famous Temple Entry Proclamation in A.D. 1936. By that proclamation the untouchables of the Hindus got the right to worship in the temples like Kanyākumari temple. In January, 1937 Gandiji praised this king for this proclamation which had torn the main root of untouchability. Gandhiji himself went to Kanyākumari temple with some untouchables and worshipped the deity.<sup>24</sup>

### 3. 8. The Condition of the Temple After Independence:

3.8.1. Travancore Devaswam Committee: After Independence Travancore and Cochin states were united during 1949. At that time changes were made in the temple administration. The administration of Kanyākumari temple was given to the Devaswam Committee. But the power to appoint the head priest of the temple was in the hands of the old Travancore King.<sup>25</sup>

3.8.2. Administration after Kanyākumari was Annexed with Tamilnad: In A.D. 1956 Kanyākumari district was annexed with Tamilnad. Immediately after that the administration of Kanyākumari temple came under the control of Hindu Endowment Board of Tamilnad. From that time onwards a manager under the Devaswam Commissioner is administering the temple.

### 4. Pūjhas and Festivals

4.1. Pūjhas: Daily ritual worship is known as Pūjhas in the temple.

4.1.1. Pūjhas from Inscriptions: From inscriptions the following informations are gathered.

In A.D. 1070 the Cōla King Vīrarājēnta endowed villages like Nattirakkuti and Perenkuti Kilkombu for the expences of the daily worship of the temple<sup>26</sup>.

In 12th century A.D. Pāndya King Parāntaka endowed lands for the pūjhas in the temple<sup>27</sup>.

In A.D. 1532 Travancore King Udaya Mārtanda Varmā arranged to supply food, ghee and mango for the morning worship called Usha Pūjha<sup>28</sup>.

4.1.2. Pujhas from the Temple Document: There is a printed document in the temple known as Pativedu. It was printed in 1921. Various pūjhas like Usha Pujha, Ethiruthē Pūjha, Pantērati Pūjha, Balamārtānda Kulasēkara Pūjha, Ucha Pūjha, Cāyaratchai, and Athāla Pūjha are mentioned in the Pativēdu.

4.1.3. Worship of Today: Ethiruthē Pūjha and Balamārtānda Kulasēkara Pūjha which were conducted during 1921 are not in vogue today. But the other worships are continued till this date.

Palli Unarthai, Viswarūpa Dharshan, Alaṅkar Dharshan and Ēkantam are the new additions to the worship conducted previously.

4.1.3.1. Palli Unarthai: By sounding conch and nathaswara Devi is woken up in the early morning.

4.1.3.2 Viswarūpa Darsanam : When the temple doors are open in the morning devotees see the Devi with her previous day's adornments. This darsan of the Devi is known as Viswarūpa Darshanam.

4.1.3.3. Alankāra Darshanam : The dharshan of Devi when the temple is opened for evening worship is known as Alankāra Dharshanam. During this worship plantain, sugar candy etc are offered to the deity.

4.1.3.4. Ēkāntham : The last worship of the Devi with lamps is called Ēkāntham.

4.1.3.5. Priests: In Kanyākumari temple Pōttis, the Canara Brahmins conduct the daily worship. They are known as Sāntis. During pūjhas the Sāntis chant mantras for the welfare of the world.

4. 2. Monthly Worships: Special worships conducted during certain days of each month are known as Matha Vishesam in the temple.

Six special worships namely Sankramam, Mon day, Fri day, Kartikai, Magam and Amāvāsa were conducted during the past.<sup>80</sup> Nowadays five worships except Magam are conducted in the temple.

First day of every month is celebrated in Kanyākumari temple as is celebrated in other temples of Tamilnad. This celebration is known as Sankramam in the temple.

Special worships are conducted on Mondays. Fridays, Kartikai days and Amāvāsa days as are conducted in other temples of Tamilnad.

4. 3. Yearly Festivals: Special worships conducted on particular days of the year are known as Āttai Vishēsham.

In 1921 sixteen Āttai Vishēsams were conducted as is evident from the Pativedu of the temple.<sup>31</sup> Fifteen festivals except Mulam Attai Thirunal are continued even today. Among these fifteen, Navaratri and Kalaba festivals are performed in a grand manner.

Navaratri festival is celebrated for ten days. During the tenth day the festival of Pari-vēttai is celebrated in a grand manner.

Importance given to music during Virushika festival is conspicuously absent today.

Tirupalli Eluchi is known as Tirupulicha in Kanyākumari temple. During this festival Tirupāvai and Tiruvempāvai are sung before the Deity in the early morning. It is significant to note that this festival is conducted in these temples in Tamilnad style where the Pūjhās and festivals are generally conducted in the temples in kerala also.

During Thiru Veṇṇpa festival songs are sung and dances are performed.

Nirai and Putharisi, the festival of the peasants of Nāngilnād is conducted in the temple during the months of Adi and Tai.

Tamil New Year Day is celebrated in the temple in Malayala form as Citra Visu.

Ōnam is a famous Malayala festival. Formerly this festival was conducted on three days namely Uttirādam, Tiruvōnam and Avittam. But nowadays the festival is conducted on Tiruvōna day only.

4. 4. Car Festival: As in other temples of Tamilnad car festival is celebrated in this temple also. Once in a year this festival is conducted during the month of Vaikāsi for ten days.

Malayala priests called Tantris conduct special pūjhas during these days. The Tantris follow Malayala Tantra method in the performance of special pūjhās. Car and Teppa festivals which are special features of this festival are not found in Malayala Tantra. These two have been celebrated in the temples of Tamilnad for centuries. So it is evident that Malayala Tantra methods and Tamilnad methods mingled in Kanyākumari car festival.

A special feature in this festival is that the Catholic fishermen of the place take an active part in pulling the car. The family members of fishermen worship the Deity of the car with great reverence and witness the car festival with great joy. This shows that the fishermen, though they are converted Catholic Christians, worship their ancient Goddess Kanyākumari with great piety.

#### 4.5 Other Special Worships:

4.5.1. Worships Known From Patjvu: The Pativedu of the temple of 1921 refers to fifteen types of special worships.<sup>32</sup> Among these Sātyam and Sanskrit Mantra worships have unique features.

4.5.1.1. Satyam: Some devotees wanted to settle their disputes with the help of the temple. The plaintiff and defendant accepted when the parties made satya in front of the Deity. Plaintiff and defendant had to pay 18 chakram<sup>33</sup> each to the temple administration.<sup>34</sup> This worship shows the strong faith of the devotees on the Deity and the role played by the temple as a court.

4.5.1.2. Sanskrit Mantra Worship: Two Sanskrit mantras namely Lalita Sahasra nama and Trisati were used for special worship in the temple even before 1921.<sup>35</sup> This worship is continued even today.

#### 4.5.2. Special Worships of Today:

4.5.2.1. Puspabisheka: Worship of the Deity with thousands of kinds of various flowers is known as Puspabisheka. This

worship is of recent origin in the temple. Every year on the first day of August Puspabisheka is celebrated.

4.5.2.2. Feeding of Virgin Girls : Feeding of Virgin girls is known as Kanyā Bojanam in the temple. If some devotees wish to feed virgin girls in the temple premises the temple authorities make arrangements for it. The temple accountant receives Rs. 22 and arranges for the feeding of eleven virgin girls in the temple prakara. The belief of getting the grace of the Goddess Kanyākumari by feeding girls of the same age group of the Devi may be the cause for this kind of worship.

4.5.2.3. Poor Feeding : Poor feeding is known as Anna Dhana in the temple. The temple authorities receive Rs. 101 from those devotees who wish to feed the poor. Food is prepared in the temple and 50 poor people are fed in the temple. The belief that the Goddess will be pleased if the poor, whom the Goddess love most are fed may be the cause for this worship.

Kanya Bojanam and Anna Dhana show the social service rendered by the devotees of Devi Kanyākumari.

4. 6. The Influence of Tamil and Malayala Methods in Pūjhās and Festivals : In Kanyākumari temple there are three kinds of worshipping deities namely Main Deity, Sribali Deity and Festival Deity in the Tamil pattern.

Though the pūjhās in the temple are conducted in the Malayalam pattern the timings are of the Tamil pattern.

The monthly worships in the temple are of the Tamil pattern.

Kalaba festival, one of the yearly festivals is purely a Malayala festival. It is conducted in the Malayalam pattern by Malayala Tantris.

It is worth mentioning that Tamil festivals like Kartika festival, Vinayaka Chaturti, Tiruppallieluchi and Sivarathri and Malayala festivals like Kalaba festival and Kani Kānuthal (seeing the fruits) are conducted in the temple.



The Car festival and Teppa festival are Tamil festivals. But slight changes have been incorporated by Malayala Tantris in these festivals.

Though the Malayala Tantris and Canarese Pottis who follow the Malayala method of worship have made slight changes, the pūjhās and festivals in Kanyākumari temple are mainly conducted in the Tamil pattern.

## 5. Temple Servants

5. 1. From 11th Century to 13th Century A.D.: From the inscriptions it can be inferred that Tiruvunāligaiyar worked in the sanctum sanctorum and Tēvar Mun Kanakku wrote temple accounts during 11th and 13th century A.D.<sup>36</sup>

5. 2. During Nayak Period: An inscription of Muthu Veerappa Nayaka refers Tanmakathar Kanakku, Sēkaryam and Sēpandara Kanakku.<sup>37</sup>

5. 3. During Balaramavarma's Period: A copper plate of Balaramavarma (A.D. 1760-61), a Travancore King refers to Sri Kāryam, Sāntikārar, Pillamār and Kankāna Kanakku.<sup>38</sup>

5. 4. Before 1921: Pativēdu of 1921 of the temple shows that Srikāryam, Agathē Srikāryam, Sri Pandāra Kanakku, Sthāna kanakku, Kalavara Kanakku, Tiruvāparana Muthalpidi and Kalavarai worked in the temple till 1921.<sup>39</sup>

5. 5. After 1922: The above mentioned Pativēdv refers to Srikāryam, Muthalpidi, Accountant. Agathē Kanakku, Kalavarai, Mēsānti, Kēlsānti, Adyayanam, Purāna Vāyanā, Dēvi Mahātmīya Jepam, Kattiyam, Brahmin servants, servants, Nāthaswaram I Class, Nāthaswaram II Class, Tavil, Sruti, Kaimani, Erattacinnam, Timiladippu, Nattuvan, Mugam Sankaram, Bahavathar, Tālam, Pala vēlai, Vessel cleaner, watchman, parivattam alakku, Kāni-yācha, Sannatiyil Kōlam Iduka, Vettiver vaippu. Murakkārī Kudikkār, Mālakattu, kankāni and Tantri who were working from 1922 onwards.<sup>40</sup>

5. 6. Temple Servants of Today : From 1922 onwards 64 people were working in the temple. But now only 41 are working in the temple. Purana Vāyana, Dēvi Mahatmiya Japam, Musician (Bāhavatar). Dance teacher (Nattuvan), Sruti, Kai-  
mani, Eratta Cinnam, Muham Sankāram, Tālam, Murakkāri, Kudikkār and Kalavarai who were working in the temple from A.D. 1922 are not working in the temple nowadays.

Among the 41 persons working today, 10 persons are working in the inns belonging to the temple. So only 31 persons are actually working in the temple. The eleven women servants (Murakkāri and Kudikkār) might have been sent out of service by the Travancore queen Sethu Lekshmi Bai. The reduction in the strength of servants may be due to the non-appointment of fresh servants in the place of the retired.

6. Temple and Society: Kanyākumari temple has close relationship with the society. Thousands of people from all over India worship Devi Kanyākumari with great reverence. Some people consider her their family deity. Their children are named after her as Kumari, Bagavathi, Bagavatiappan, Bagavatiya Pillai and Bagavatiyammai. The devotees offer lambs' gold, clothings, flower, land and money to the deity. The temple has been functioning as a social institution for a long time.

#### 6. 1. Social Services Done by the Temple:

6.1.1. Offering Free Food to the Devotees: During 12th century A. D. Parantaka Pandya arranged for the feeding of devotees who visited the temple on the next day of Tai pūsam.<sup>41</sup>

The Travancore King Balaramavarma (A.D. 1760-61) gave 3353 1/16 panam to the temple for the feeding of brahmins.<sup>42</sup>

A feeding hall was attached to the temple about 25 years back. It was known as Ūttu purai. In that 50 brahmins were given free lunch and dinner every day. The lunch and dinner were known as Mutalam and Attalam respectively.<sup>43</sup>

During Vaikasi festival many devotees were fed during noon and night. On the ninth day of the festival all those who

assembled to witness the festival were fed. The feeding on the ninth day of the festival was known as Pidaga Satyai.<sup>44</sup>

6.1.2. Feeding of Prasadas to the Devotees : From the Pativu of 1921 of the temple it is understood that fruits, coconut, rice, sandal paste, turmeric, panchamruta, salad of milk, idichu piliña payasam, green gram, lemon juice etc were given to the devotees as prasadas after pūjhās and festivals.<sup>45</sup>

6.1.3. Registering Office : In the past, temples functioned as registering offices of documents. Kings and others registered the copy of their documents on temple walls. Many kings have registered thier orders and gift deeds in Kanyākumari Temple.<sup>46</sup> People have inscribed number of gift documents on the walls of the temple. An inscription at Kanyākumari Temple wall is the gift document to the Deity Tiruvēnkataṁudayār of Tānumālayar Swāmi temple of Sucindram.<sup>47</sup>

6.1.4. Employer : Temples were functioning as employer for a long time. In the past Kanyākumari Temple owned vast areas of land. Inscriptions reveal that these lands were donated to the temple by kings like Parāntakā, Kulōthungā I and Vīraṛajēndrā.<sup>48</sup> The lands might have been distributed to farmers and certain portion of the produce might have been received by the temple. Quite a number of farmers might have been benefited by this system.

The temple might have given employment to the carpenters, sculptors and painters of the area. From an inscription it can be inferred that an ironsmith was engaged in the temple for engraving inscriptions and other sculptural works in the the temple.<sup>49</sup>

From the copper plate of Balaramavarma it is understood that painters, carpenters and sculptors were engaged in the temple for painting the walls of the sanctum sanctorum, repairing the wooden planks in the ceiling and to make an idol from an alloy of gold and silver.<sup>50</sup>

From inscriptions it is inferred that Devakanniyar, Tiruvunaligaiyar and Devar Munkanakku were working in the temple during later Cōla period.<sup>51</sup>

During the period of Travancore kings about sixty five servants were working in the temple.<sup>52</sup>

Nowadays forty four persons are working under the temple administration. During festive days number of temporary servants are engaged for holding lamps and other works.

Apart from giving direct employment as cited above the temple is giving indirect help to many people for their livelihood. In the street in front of the temple there are number of shops belonging to the temple. These shops are rented to small shop keepers. These shop keepers and their dependents earn their livelihood from these shops. As thousands of pilgrims visit the temple everyday the poor fisherwomen who sell conch shells, the photographers, the owners of lodges, hotels and petty shops are benefited.

6.1.5. Consumer of Goods : Formerly the barter system was in vogue. During that period the temple might have received its required articles by giving rice in exchange. Nowadays the temple is buying oil, thread and articles necessary for cooking from the nearby shops. During festive days clothes, oils and articles necessary for special worship are bought from nearby shops. From the above it can be inferred that the temple seems to be one of the biggest consumers of goods and thereby helps the society at large.

6.1.6. Educational Institution : Sri Devi Kumari Women's College at Kuliturai has been run by the endowment board of Kanyākumari District Hindu temples. The major portion of the income of Kanyākumari Temple (which is the only temple in which maximum income accrues) is spent on the maintenance of the college.

During festive days Discourses, debates, dramas and dances relating to Hindu religion are conducted. Famous religious personages visit the temple and conduct religious classes to the devotees. Swami Citbavananta, a famous monk of the Ramakrishna order had conducted religious classes in the temple for number of years.

6.1.7. Library and Reading Room : There was a library and reading room in the temple in the near past. Books like Periya Puranam, Devi Mahatmyam, VivekaCūtamani, Vālmiki Ramayana, Upanishad Vyākhyāna, Hindu Secret Science and Cities etc were present in the library.<sup>53</sup> Some years back the library was closed and the books in the library were sent to Hindu Endowment library at Nagercoil.

There was a reading room in the Kalaimahal Building belonging to the temple a few years back. The reading room was open to the public from 8 to 11 A.M. and 4 to 8 P.M. everyday.

6.1.8. Free Lodge : The present Pallavan Transport Corporation office and the Township office were under the control of the temple in the past. The rooms in these buildings were given to the devotees for lodging free of cost.<sup>54</sup>

6.1.9. Court : The special worship known as 'Satyam' explained earlier shows that the temple acted as a court in the past.

6.2. Social Institutions Related to the Temple : Some institutions related to the temple render social service. Among them the following are worth mentioning.

6.2.1. Vivekananda Kendra : Swami Vivekananda came to Kanyākumari during A.D. 1890 and worshipped Devi Kanyākumari. Swami himself told that a plan developed in his mind by the grace of Devi Kanyākumari.<sup>55</sup> In memory of Swami Vivekananda, Vivekananda Kendra was started in Kanyākumari in A.D. 1972. This Kendra gives training to full time social workers. This Kendra is having a medical organisation called Vivekananda Chikitsa Kendra. This medical centre offers medical aid to about thirty thousand people in and around Kanyākumari.<sup>56</sup> A mobile hospital organised by the Kendra gives medical aid to about 45,000 people living in three villages namely Sāmitoppu, Kanakappapuram and Īchanvilai.<sup>57</sup>

Niveditā Bālvādi, a nursery school organised by the Kendra imparts nursery education to the children of the locality.<sup>58</sup>

6.2.2. Sri Kanya Gurukula Ashrama: In 1952 Alamelu Ammal, a devotee of Devi Kanyākumari started social institution called Sri Kanya Gurukula Ashrama. This institution was started in the feeding hall belonging to the temple. In the beginning twenty five orphans were given shelter in this Ashrama. Nowadays 110 orphans are brought up in this ashrama<sup>59</sup>. This ashrama is conducting social institutions like a nursery school and a tailoring institution called Vallalar Vanitha Mandali.

6.2.3. Swami Vivekananda Reading Room and Library: Swami Vivekananda after worshipping Devi Kumari spent one night under a tree near the temple of Kanyākumari. Parameswaran Pillai, a devotee of Devi Kanyākumari and a great admirer of Swami Vivekananda started a reading room and library in 1935 in the same place where Swami Vivekananda spent the night.<sup>60</sup> This library possesses about 7000 books of various languages like Tamil, Malayalam, Canarese, Marati, Bengali and English.

Tamil, Malayalam, Bengali, Hindi and English dailies and many monthly magazines are available in the reading room. From its inception pilgrims are coming to the temple from various places and the people of the township of Kanyākumari are benefitted by this library and reading room.

6.2.4. Kanyākumari Hindu Hospital: Sri Jeyendra Saraswathi Sankaracharya Swami, the head of Kānchi Kāmakoti Peeta visited Kanyākumari during February 1978. During his visit he announced that he would be starting a free hospital in the name of Devi Kanyākumari at Sucindram. The next day he inaugurated the Kanyākumari Hindu Free Hospital at Sucindram. By the evening service of the hospital every day thousands of patients get free treatment.

6.2.5. Services of Matās: An inscription dated 1127 A.D. shows that Sri Vallaba Deva, a Pandya King arranged for the free offering of food to the devotees who visited Ulagamuludutaiyal mada after bathing in the holy waters of Kanyakumari.<sup>61</sup>

Sadaya Varman Kulasekara, a Pandya King arranged to

offer food in Kulasekaran madam to the devotees who visited Kanyākumari temple on Tai Pusa festival<sup>62</sup>.

Nowadays Tiruvavaduturai Mada and Amavasai Kattalai mada are rendering social service by offering food to the devotees of Devi Kanyākumari.

7. Temple and Fine Arts: Kanyākumari temple has been functioning as a promoter of fine arts like architecture, sculpture, painting, music, dance, drama and literature.

7. 1. Architecture: The study of the temple buildings give us some idea about the architectural patterns of later Cōlās, Pandyas, Vijayanagar kings and the Travancore kings.

7. 2. Sculpture: The idol of the Devi in sanctum sanctorum is the oldest in the temple. It is the most beautiful sculpture found in the temple. This is an example for the perfection of Tamil sculpture during the latter Cōlā period. The sculpture of the old man with a stick in his hand on the south wall of the sanctum sanctorum is very beautiful. The yāḷi sculptures in the Tatti Mantapa, Front Mantaba and Kanniyaambalam are examples for the fertile imagination and superb skill of the sculptors.

7. 3. Painting: During Vrishika festival a painter is appointed to draw the picture of the Devi every day in the month of Kartika; and pūjhās are conducted to the picture.

From the copper plate of Balaramavarma (A.D. 1760-61) it can be inferred that paintings on the walls of the temple were done during his reign. But those paintings are not found in the temple now.

Recent paintings are found in various places of the temple. The Navaratri Mandapa seems to be an art gallery which abounds in mural paintings. Most of the paintings depict various aspects of Devi Kanyākumari.

The painting of Mahishasura Martani on the eastern wall of the Mandapa is one of the beautiful paintings in the temple. The painting reminds us of the Mahishasura Martani Sculpture in

the cave temple of Māmallapuram. This picture shows the vehemence of war on the still wall.

The painting of the Deity on the entrance of Sribali Prakārā is the most beautiful among the paintings of the temple.

7. 4. Music : The revised Pativētu of the temple refers to ten musicians namely Nātaswaram I class, Nātaswaram II class, Tahil-kāran, Sutikāran, Kaimanikāran, Eretta Chinnam, Timilayadippu, Mirutankakāran, Bāhavatar and Tālakkāran.<sup>63</sup>

Nowadays six musicians namely Nātaswaram I class, Nātaswaram II class, Taviḷ, Mrutankam, Tālam and Panchavātyam are working in the temple.

During Vrishika festival songs were sung every day in front of the newly drawn painting of the Deity. This festival itself was known as Vrishika Pāttu (Vrishika song)<sup>64</sup>

During Tiruvenpa festival the Utsava Deity was kept in a swing and songs were sung before the deity by the Murakkāri of the temple.<sup>65</sup> Nowadays Nataswaram is played instead of singing songs.

On festivals like Navarātri and Tirukārtikai the Utsava Mūrthi is taken round the streets. During that period Nātaswaram, Mrutankam, Suti and Talam are played.

During Vaikāsi festival local musicians and specialists from other places are invited. On each day of the festival any one of the items like vocal music, instrumental music, Villupāttu (a famous folk song of the area) is performed. During the Car festival musicians sit on the car and play Nātaswaram, Mrutankam, Suti and Tāla. Cendai and Kaitālam are played in front of the car. When the car is moving a big drum known as Pērikai which is attached to the back side of the car is beāten.

Every morning and Evening the temple plays devotional songs like Tirupāvai, Tēvāram, Tirupuhaḷ and Abirāmi Antāti.

From the Pativetu of 1921 it is inferred that eleven musical instruments were available in the temple.<sup>66</sup> At present only five instruments are available in the temple. Instruments like Suti, Kaimani, Erettacinnam, Timilai and Mrutankam, which



were in use in the past are not found in the temple now. The reduction in the number of musicians and carelessness in preserving the musical instruments may be the causes for the reduction in the number of musical instruments in the temple.

7.5. Dance : Temple servants called Ātum Pātirankal (women dancers) promoted dance in the temple.<sup>67</sup> They were given coaching by Nattuvanār, the dance teacher<sup>68</sup>.

Nowadays dance performances like Barata Nāttiyam, Mōhini Āttam and folk dances are performed during festivals.<sup>69</sup>

7.6. Drama : Dramas were enacted during the festivals of Tiruvenpā and Sivarātri by the Ātum Pātirangal of the temple.<sup>70</sup> The Nattuvanar, was directing the performance.<sup>71</sup>

During the last few years dramas were conducted during Vaikasi festivals by drama troupes of Tamilnad and Kerala. Religious, social and dance dramas were performed by these troupes.<sup>72</sup>

7.7. Literature : Kanyākumari temple has become the main source for the writing of number of literary works like Kanyākumari Talapurānam, Bagavati Nāchiyār Tiruppani Kalavu Mālai, Kanyākumari Bagavati Amman Pillaitamil, Kanyākumari Bagavati Antāti-mālai, Kanniyālaya Mahattuvam, Tenkanni Kumari Venbā Antāti, Bagavati Pā Mālai, and Kanyākumari Kaliturai Antāti. Apart from the literary value of these works they also throw a flood of light on the services of kings to the temple, the theft in the temple, pūjhas and festivals of the temple and the glory of the Deity.

8. The Temple and Stories : Number of stories are told in connection with the temple. Most of the stories are found in the Talapurana of the temple. The stories in Talapurana might have been written to establish the supremacy of Devi Kanyākumari over other Gods.

Apart from the Talapurana tales three folk tales are also popular. These tales might have been originated to confirm the relationship between Devi Kanyākumari and three families belonging to fisherman and nadar communities.

In general, it may be said that almost all stories contain supernatural elements as they are connected with Gods and Goddesses.

Conclusion : Devi Kanyakumari might have been worshipped from very ancient day. Her worship might have been popular during Upanishad period.

In the beginning, the temple might have been constructed by mortar. Māran Cadayan, a Pandya King might have renovated the temple in stone. Later Cōlās, Later Pāndyās. Vijayanagar Kings, Nayak Kings and Travancore Kings might have done some renovations in the temple.

The temple was under the sway of Kings and chieftains like Āis, Cērās, Pāndyās, Cōlās, Vēnād Kings, Vijayanagar Kings, Nayak Kings and Travancore Kings. Pāndyās considered Devi Kanyakumari as their family deity.

The inscriptions and copper plates connected with the temple throw flood of light on the history of the temple and the kings who ruled over the area.

The pūjhās and festivals of the temple might have been conducted from time immemorial. Some of the pūjhās and festivals which were in use in the past are not in vogue today. But new additions have been introduced in the near past.

Though a few Malayala Festivals like Kalaba Festival, Kani kanutal are present, most of the festivals conducted in the temple are Tamil Festivals. Though the Tantris and Pottis who follow the Malayalam method have made some changes in the methods, the pūjhās and festivals of the temple are mainly conducted in the Tamil method.

The number of servants in the temple today are lesser than those present in the past. Low salaries and non-appointment of fresh hands in the place of retired persons might have been the reasons for the reduction in the strength of servants in the temple.

The temple is functioning as a social institution for a long time. It has served the society in various capacities like registering office, educational institution, court, consumer of goods and employer. Institutions connected with the temple like Vivekananta

Kendra, Kanya Gurukula Ashrama etc also perform yeomen social service.

Kanyākumari temple had been a source for the development of fine arts like architecture, sculpture, painting, dance, drama and literature.

The temple is a model for the various architectural forms developed in South India.

The idol of Devi Kanyākumari is one of the ancient and beautiful specimens of sculptures found in Tamilnad.

The Navaratri mandapa of the temple seems to be a gallery of painting.

The temple seemed to be a centre of music where number of musicians played on various musical instruments. Though the number of musicians and musical instruments have been considerably reduced, music plays a vital role in various activities of the temple even today.

The art of dance was promoted in the temple by the lady servants of the temple called Ādum Pāttirangal under the āble guidance of Nattuvanār, the dance teacher. Nowadays dances are performed during the festivals by dancers coming from various places.

Dramas staged during the festivals of Tiruvenpa and Sivaratri in the past are not staged nowadays.

The number of literary works produced about the temple and Deity have literary as well as historic value.

The temple has been the main source for the production of number of Puranic and folk tales.

On the whole Devi Kanyākumari and Her temple have been functioning as a source of inspiration and guidance to society for centuries

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# The Nellaiappar Temple

Dr. Uma Maheswari

The Nellaiappar Temple grew into a complex gradually from the 7th Century A.D. in Tirunelveli which was a capital of the late Pandyas. But it is interesting to note that there is no reference of Tirunelveli in the Sankam Literature. But some scholars attribute the lines of Madurai Kanchi To Tirunelveli<sup>1</sup> and Dr. U.V. Swaminatha Iyer opines that 'Nellin Ur. Konda' relates to Saliyur the name of Tirunelveli as mentioned in the Thalapuranam.<sup>2</sup>

Tirunelveli in the Seventh Century:

Gnanasambandar's verse is the only source to prove that Tirunelveli was in existence in the 7th Century A.D.<sup>3</sup> It was a rich town and the people were very hospitable to the guests and were performing poojas and festivals to the deity. 'Tirunelveli urai Selvar'. It was a popular town in the time of the saint.

Tirunelveli as Mentioned in the Inscriptions :

கீழ் வெம்ப நாட்டுத் தேவதானம் திருநெல்வேலிக் கோயில்<sup>4</sup>  
கீழ் வெம்ப நாட்டுத் தேவதானம்<sup>5</sup>  
கீழ் வெம்ப நாட்டுத் தேவதானம் பிரமதேயம் திருநெல்வேலியான  
குலசேகர சதுர்வேதி மங்கலம்<sup>6</sup>  
கீழ் வெம்ப நாட்டுத் திருநெல்வேலி<sup>7</sup>

The Place ruled by, the Pandyas who were wearing neem garland was known as Pandyanadu, Vemban Nadu and Vembanadu. Hence Tirunelveli was known as Keelvembanadu and it was a brahmadeyam also. Tirunelveli, situated on the banks of Tambraparni should have been the capital of the Pandyas and thus secured a mention in the Gnanasambandar's Thevaram

Porunai:

The river Tambraparni is not mentioned in the Sankam Literature. But the name Porunai referred to in the Sankam Literature, belongs to the Chera Country<sup>8</sup>.

Eighth regnal year inscription of Mar. Sundara Pandya II gives the name of river as தண் பொருதீத்தம்<sup>9</sup>

Inscription of Sundara Pandya Found in the temple of Chandrasekara in Maramangalam mentions this river and Rajaraja's 28th regnal year inscription says that on the northern bank of this river is situated தென் திருமால் இருக்கும் சோலை. But the very same river is mentioned as Tambraparni in the Raguvamsa of Kalidasa. So Vaiyapuri Pillai concludes that this river was known as Tambraparni in the 5th Century A.D.<sup>10</sup>.

Origin and Development of South Indian Temples :

The temples in South India are mostly situated on the shores (Kadal Malai, Thirumaraikkadu), on the hillocks (திருக்கழுக்குன்றம்) (Thiruverumbur), on the banks of lakes and rivers and at the sangam of rivers (Thiruvarangam, Thiruvanaika)

In the ancient time people worshipped trees and Pliny says that the old form of the temple was tree<sup>11</sup>. Ancient Tamils believed that the gods dwelled in the trees. The term 'Alamar Selvan' shows that the abode of Lord Shiva was Banyan tree. The temples were situated either in the forests or orchards; for eg. Thiruvengkadu, Talayalankadu, Kadambavanam (Madurai) Vilvavanam, Venuvanam (Thirunelveli)<sup>12</sup> Therefore, when the temples were given importance, the trees became 'Sthalavrikshas' (tree of the particular place)

The Temple of Nellaiappar:

Origin of South Indian temples is mystery. It is difficult to give the date of the origin of temples. Kshetravenppa mentions that there were number of Siva temples and the Thevaram of Navukkarasar says that there were 78 Siva temples.

The time of a temple could be traced from the literary and inscriptional evidences and the Architectural style of the temple. Thus it is not easy to fix the date of the origin of the Nellaiappar temple. It is evident that it was in existence during the 7th Century A.D. and it gradually grew into a big complex during the ages since 7th Century A.D.



The temple is a double temple dedicated to Shiva and his consort Parvati. It is divided into two equal portions, two whole occupying a rectangle 850' by 756'. As Kondrayadi Lord is supposed to be the first deity in the Suchindram temple, Moola Mahalingar in the temple is supposed to be the deity in existence during the 7th Century A.D.

**Moola Mahalingar :**

This is a small shrine with a garbagriha and Arthamandapa which has a close resemblance to that of the Malayadi Kurichi Mahadeva temple which was founded by Sendan Maran of 7th Century A.D. Therefore it could be assumed that his shrine too would have been constructed at the same time.

This shrine is in a lower place whereas the temple of Nellaiappar is at a higher place. Half the adhistanam with the inscriptions on the walls is buried and thus bears testimony that this is the ancient temple.

The inscriptions of Cholan Talaikonda Veerapandya, contemporary of Rajaraja the great, are the oldest found on the Western and Northern walls of the temple. They are in Vatteluttu and record the endowments given in the time of Veera Pandya.

The walls of the garbagriha of Nellaiappar do not bear any inscriptions; but there are number of inscriptions of the Medieval Pandyas on the walls of the first and second prakaras of the temple, two inscriptions of Kulotunga one on a broken pillar lying in the second prakara and the other on the north wall of Kuberalinga temple, and two inscriptions of Rajendra I found on the pillars in southern side of the first prakara of the big temple. So it could be ascribed that the temple of Nellaiappar would have been constructed at a later period.

The poojas are performed first to this deity proves the antiquity of the temple. Navukkarasar, in the Thevaram describes a deity elsewhere as Thanthonri Appanar self appearance of Lord and the lord of Thiruvanmiyur of Tiruvorriyur 'Than Oru Suyambu'

(the deity that emerged) Gnanasambandar, in whose hymns number of internal evidences could be seen would have certainly mentioned that the deity emerged from the earth if he had known thus.

It is not strange to have a number of temples in Tamil Nadu with images of antiquity - Renganathar shrine in the Parthasarathy temple is the ancient one and the worship of Parthasarathy would have been founded in the time of Dantivarma Pallava or Pallavamalla, says K.K. Pillai<sup>13</sup>. There is no bronze for Parthasarathy and the marriage of Renganatha and Vedavalli also prove the antiquity.

Hence the shrines that rose in the time remote would have perhaps lost its name and another shrine would have become popular.

Veymuthar :

An inscription of Mar. Kulasekara I on the east wall of the temple states that the king constructed the wall of the high prakara of the temple of God Shiva who had sprung up from a bamboo, from the booty obtained from the Kerala, Chola and Hoysalas<sup>14</sup>. His 27th regnal year inscription records the name of the signitory as 'Vendavalandakōn'.

Thiruvilayadal and the venba of Rettaipulavar mention the deity as veymuthar (pearl of bomboo)<sup>15</sup> Arikesari Parakrama Pandya who was responsible for the construction of Thenkasi temple gave a gift of golden cup to the deity who sprang up from a bamboo. Palapattadai Sokkanatha Pillai of 17th Century in his 'Alagar Killai Vidu Thoothu' mentions the name of the deity as Vēymuthar. So the shrine of the Lord named as Vēymuthar came into prominence in the 13th Century A.D., and the other old shrine became next to this shrine.

There are number of stories relating to the deity of a shrine springing up from a bamboo. It is believed that the deity Nellaiappar also sprang up from a bamboo and hence

it is known as Veymuther; as the lingam was found in a midst of bamboos, he was also called Venuvananathar.

#### Name of the Deities in the Inscriptions :

It is interesting to note that the names by which the deity is known today are not found in the inscriptions except in the inscription of Jat Sundara Pandya I. It mentions the name as Venuvaneswarar and Vrihivrihiswarar ( as he saved the paddy from being washed away by the rains )

Thirunelveli Thevar S. I. I. Vol. V. 449

Thirunelveli Udaya Thambiran „ „ 408

Thirunelveli Udaya Nayanar „ „ 417

Venuvaneswarar, Vrihivrihiswarar 407

Thirukkamakottatu Aludaya Nachi.

One of the signitorie's name is Thirunelveli Udayan found in the inscription of Jatavarman Veera Pandya's 4th regnal year<sup>17</sup>. Maravarman Konerinmai Konda Perumal Sundara Pandya in his 13th regnal year inscription calls himself as Poosam Piranda Thirunelveli Perumal.<sup>18</sup> A Pandya king who rules in the 17th Century is called Maravarman Ponnin Perumal.<sup>19</sup> So it is clear that the names Nellaiappar and Kanthimathy were very later given to the god and his consort.

#### The Ruler who did Service to the Temple :

Sthalapuranam's version is that Ninra Seer Nedumaran constructed the temple upto the manimantapam. He was the ruler known as Arikesari Maravarman, the hero of Pandikovai to whom Sundara pays encomium. Velvikudi records the heroic deeds of this king, the thulabaram Hiranyagarbham performed by him, bears no proof to the effect that he did service to this temple. Thiruthondar Puranam and Tiruttondar Thiruvanthathi mention his victory in the Nelveli battle. Perhaps after this victory, on the way he could have had the darshan of the deity.

The musical pillars in the Manimantapam and the statues belong to the Naik period. It is doubtless that the temple with the prakara was in existence during the Chola period.

Sekkilar, the minister of Kulottunga mentions that Navukkarasar had been to Tirunelveli. But there is no mention of

this in this Thevaram, whereas the verses sung in praise of the deities at Rameswaram and Courtallam are in Thevaram. It could be assumed that he had been to Tirunelveli on the way and the hymn sung by him is not available.

It is believed that the theppothsavam in the temple is celebrated just in remembrance of his visit to Tirunelveli.

The temple with the small shrines in the complex gradually grew into a big complex from the Pandya period and should have been completed in the Naik period.

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## **2. STRUCTURE AND GREATNESS OF THE TEMPLE**

The Temple looks to one who looks at it from a distance as it that there is a mantapam attached to the temple. But there is a road between the temple and the mantapam.

Just before entering into the gopuram, (gateway) the place known as ambalam has beautiful wooden sculptures of gods and goddesses along with erotic sculptures on the roof.

### **Structure of the Temple:**

The Temple is situated in the heart of the town and around the temple run the four main streets, from these run other streets at right angles, east to west or north to South.

There are three gateways (gopurams) to each half of the temple and one in the wall dividing the two temples. The principal gateway faces the east, the entrance to the temple. Fergusson says that this temple will serve to give a general idea of the arrangement of the edifices.<sup>1</sup>

The double temple in the great square is divided into equal portions of which one is dedicated to the God Shiva and the south half to his consort Parvati, with the tanks, corridors, thousand pillared mantapas and the orchard between the two.

This temple with the big corridors stands next to Rameswaram and is appreciated for its beauty next to Meenakshi temple.

## **Growth of the Temple Through The Ages :**

Religious tradition, the Agamas and the poojas and festivals encouraged the growth of the temple architecture. Number of Shiva and Vishnu temples arose in Tamil Nadu. Devotees did service to the temples and endowed the riches to them.

The Saiva Samayachars and the Alwars contributed a lot to the awakening of the people and the religious renaissance also led to the growth of the temple everywhere. Pallavas were the founders of stone temples called 'Kaṇṇali' and their contemporary Pandyas followed their footsteps which resulted in the beautiful monuments of the Thirupparankunram, Narasimha temple at Anaimalai and Tiruchi cave temple and Malayadi Kurichi temple.

There could have been temples before the Kalabhras also, as various kinds of temples are mentioned in Navukkarasar's Thevaram which would not have sprung up suddenly in the 7th Century<sup>2</sup> Thirumozhi also mentions a number of temples.<sup>3</sup>

The South Indian temples differ in details during the five periods i.e.,

|                      |                                     |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Paliava Style     | A.D. 600-850                        |
| 2. Chola period      | „ 850-1100 Age of Vimanas           |
| 3. Under the Pandyas | „ 1180-1350 „ Gopuras<br>(Gateways) |
| 4. Vijayanagar style | „ 1336-1565                         |
| 5. Madurai Nayaks    | „ 1600-1700                         |

The dating of a building is possible from the characteristic forms from the pillars, bracket, super imposed on the capital of a pillar etc.

The temples made of brick were in existence and from the beginning of 9th Century A.D. stone temples are found. There were twenty stone temples constructed from 8th-9th Century.<sup>4</sup> lacks of ample sources did not encourage the scholars to do research on the Pandya style and growth and to fix the date as the Pallava and Chola architecture attracted the scholars.

The inscriptions of the Nallaiappar temple show the gradual growth and development of the temple from the 7th Century A.D.

The name of Moola Mahalingar, the present name of one of the deities is not found in the inscriptions, but it is recorded that poojas were performed in the Anavaradadan temple perhaps the deity was then known as Anavaradadana and Vrihivriheswarar Lord of paddy hedge. The name Venuvaneswara, lord of bamboo forest is the name of God who sprang up from the bamboo and also named Thirunelveli Uadya Nayanar in the inscriptions and this deity is known as Nallaiappar today, who is the presiding deity.

Therefore the name Thirunelveli Urai Selvar found in Gnanasambandar's Thevaram denotes Moola Mahalingar and the shrine which is a replica of Malayadi Kurichi temple, was constructed or in existence in the 7th century A.D.

#### **Temple of Moola Mahalingar :**

The deity is in a small shrine with a Vimana and arthamantapa like that of Pallava temple which shows the antiquity of the temple.

The pillars and the walls are half buried and there are "vatteluthu" inscriptions on the walls of the temple. Till the Pallava period the temples had only the "sanctum sanctorum" and the "arthamantapa". No mantapas were constructed around the temple. Hence this stands as an excellent example of Pandyan temple in the 7th century.

The Pandyas neither renewed the temples nor made the temples bigger. The Cholas gave importance to the Vimanas for which Periakoil is an excellent example. But the Pandyas were keen on constructing small temples, mantapas and gateways in the prakaras. The gateways were beautiful with beautiful sculptures and they were built in such a way to attract the devotees. The first and second storey of the gateways were built with stones and these grew into larger sizes through the ages thus diminishing the size of the vimanas.

### **Nellaiappar Temple:**

This is the main shrine with the garbagraha, arthamantapa, mahamantapa and manimantapa. There are nine pillars with padmabandam and pillars in the southern, western and eastern prakaras round the sanctuary belong to Pandya period. There are round pillars on the padmabhandam and the lofters (Potigai) are cut like pearl oyster. The pillars with the inscriptions of Kulottunga I and Rajendra I bear testimony that these pillars were built before the medieval Pandyas. Therefore it is doubtless to say that these pillars were in existence during the period of early Cholas. The walls of this first prakara bear the epigraphies of Maravarma Sundara Pandya I & II and Jat. Sundara Pandya I.

It is a common feature in the Pandya regions that the temples do not have the statues of gods and goddesses in the niches and hence the niches are plain.

The walls of the mahamantapa bear a number of Pandya inscriptions though the mantapa has a number of pillars of Naik period.

So it could be assumed that the Nellaiappar temple would have been in existence in the 9th Century A.D.

The western prakara known as Sivalokapathi is named as Vikrama Pandya Thirumadamaligai.<sup>5</sup> Raman says that this prakara was constructed by Maravarman Kulasekara I, In the second prakara are situated Kuberalinga shrine whose walls have the inscriptions of Kulottunga and Pollapillayar shrine. There are inscriptions of Mar. Sundara Pandya I & II, Jat. Kulasekara I on the same walls of the second prakara. Therefore the third prakara (outer wall) was constructed by Mar. Kulasekara I.

### **Pollapillayar :**

The inscriptions name the deity as Pollapillaiyar (ie. to say hewn out-emerged, swayambu) Many endowments were made to the deity of this small shrine during the reign of Mar. Kulasekara I, Vikrama Pandya and Jat. Veera Pandya and arthamantapa was also constructed by a devotee called Narayanan Narayanan Maththikottu Veeramalagiya Pandyathevar. So this shrine was very popular in the 13th century.



The Arthamandapa has only four plain pillars and the entrance is in the southern side. The deity is facing the east and there is window cut out of stone, known as 'Pillaithondu'. It is a belief that if a person enters the temple through this, he gains punya and if people worship this deity for 41 days and do archana will get issues. Therefore the deity is known as Adaikalam Koduththa Perumal. The other name is Pillaithondu Pillayar.

The shrine is situated in the southern side of the second prakara and the deity facing east of the entrance at the southern side of the shrine.

#### **Ilaya Pillaiyar :**

This temple is situated in the south western side of Thambra-sabha with a small sanctum sanctorum and an arthamantapa with four plain round pillars and the pattai in the pothigai seems plain.

The deity in the standing form facing the east is a beautiful sculpture of 12th century A.D. style. The abhaya hastha is slightly inclined and this type of deity is called Sikhivahane.<sup>7</sup> On either sides of the deity are his consorts Valli Devasena with neelotpala and lotus in their hands respectively.

Inscription of Jat. Kulasekara's 26th regnal year mentions this deity as Subramanya Pillayar.<sup>8</sup> and the inscription of Jat. Veera Pandya's 7th regnal year records the endowments made to this temple.<sup>9</sup> Therefore it is clear that this shrine was in existence in the 12th Century A.D. A dancing girl by name Nakkam Urimai Alagiya Perumal Thalaikolli who was perhaps a devotee of this lord made endowments and arrangements for Veedi Ula.

#### **Kuberaalingam:**

This is another small shrine with sanctum and an arthamandapam lying on the northern side of the main shrine. This temple adhistanam bears the inscriptions of Kulottunga I proving that this was in existence during the Chola period itself.

Two inscriptions, one belonging to the 4th regnal year of Jat. Veera Pandya Theva and the other 4th regnal year

of Mar. Sundara Pandya II mentioning the endowments to the lord Jatatharisvaramudayar and Thadariesraamudayar.<sup>10</sup> So this temple in the name of Kuberalingam today in the time of Cholas was known as mentioned in the inscriptions and was enjoying popularity and patronage.

### **Names of the deity in the inscriptions :**

Chokkanar, Anavaratatānar, Alagiya Thiruchitrāmbalam Udayar are some of the names of the deity found in the inscriptions, Inscriptions in the 11th regnal year of Mar. Sundara Pandya II records an endowment made to Chokkan and in the same inscription the location of the temple of Jatatharisvaramudayar is given. But it is not mentioned, which deity is known as Chokkanar.<sup>11</sup>

Mar. Sundara Pandyan's 11th regnal year inscription mentions the name of the deity which was installed in the temple of Thirunelveli Udaya Nayanar as Alagiya Thiruchitrāmbalamudayar.<sup>12</sup> It could be assumed that the Sahasralingam temple is the temple mentioned in the inscription.

Jat. Kulasekara Pandyan's 5th regnal year inscription records the gifts given to the musicians to play on the instruments in the temple of Anavaratatana Perumal<sup>13</sup>. In another inscription the name of the deity "Anavaratatana Perumal", is found<sup>14</sup>.

So the deity who always showers the blessings is Moola Mahalingar whose name as Vrihivrihiswar in another inscription was known by these names.

### **Madurai Style :**

The end of Vijayanagar architecture is in Madura style and could be said this style is the renaissance of Pandyan architecture. The Naik rulers are responsible for the growth and renaissance.

The new additions in the old temple are the prakaras and this style reached its zenith during the 17th century A.D. Madurai, Tirunelveli, Ramanathapuram and Tiruchirappalli are rich in the Naik architectural monuments and the temples in

Chidambaram, Vrinjipuram, Srirangam, Madurai, Tirunelveli and Rameswaram are excellent examples for beautiful sculptures and architecture. Thousand pillared mantapams are the important addition in the Vijayanagar style.

### **Pillars of the Naik Period :**

It became a tradition to cut out portrait sculptures in the Naik period. They were the sculptures of either Gods and Goddesses (like those in Meenakshi temple) or the sculptures of kings or the patrons who gave gifts to the temples. It became a tradition to have the portrait sculptures of Naik rulers in the 16th, 17th century A.D. which are found in the temples of Srirangam, Madurai, Rameswaram, Thiruvanaikaval, Thiruvavarur, Thiruvannamalai and Srivilliputtur which are nearly 32 in number and became famous.

There are some pillars with portrait sculptures in the corridor of the third prakara which lead to Kanthimathi temple. Names are not given. These are perhaps the sculptures of some Naik rulers who ruled till Pillayan and these portrait sculptures resemble that of the Pudumantapam in Madurai.<sup>16</sup>

### **Somavara Mantapam :**

On the northern side of eastern side of the third prakara lies this mantapam which has 78 pillars, where two are hewn in the form of Gopurams (Gateways) which attract the tourists. The stone and wooden lofts are beautifully carved. some pillars have portrait sculptures of Gods.

There are two old pillars with inscriptions at the entrance the mantapam should have been brought from elsewhere.

### **Rishapamantapam :**

The southern side in the same prakara is called rishapa mantapam and this was constructed by Sivanthiappa Naik in 1654 A.D. There are four beautiful portrait sculptures of Kuravan, Kurathi, Rati and Manmatha.

The entrance to the second prakara is called Sarvanalvadya

mantapam which has the portrait sculptures of Pagadai Raja, Veerabhadran, Karna and Arjuna.

### **Manimantapam :**

This is the entrance to Mahamantapam. There are musical pillars of which two have dwarabalagas also. This is constructed according to the definition given in Mallapuram says Dr. Nagasamy.<sup>17</sup>

### **Musical Pillars :**

Musical pillar is an excellent offering of the Naik rulers. These are seen from Lepakshi till Sucindrum and these pillars can produce all the seven surams. The sculptors who came to the South made these pillars on their southward journey. These pillars are found in Meenakshi temple, Alwar Tirunagari, Sucindrum Temple and Padmanabhaswami Temple at Tiruvandrum.

Musical pillars are a real marvel of art and mean more ornamental pieces. They are found in many sizes, cylindrical, square, octagonal or fluted. They have maintained a perfect pitch relationship with one pillar to another pillar to provide melodic harmony.

The pillars in Padmanabhaswamy temple have the sculptures of Gods and Goddesses and produce musical sounds of various instruments.

The pillars in the Nellaiappar Temple have lost the capacity of producing the "Swaras" and a few pillars only produce "sa, ri, ga, ma, pa".

Thiru K. Sankaranar, a versatile scholar has proved that with these Pancha Swaras, Harikambodhi and Karakarapriya could be played and he produced notes on the pillars for a sloka from Samagana and some other songs which were broadcasted by the Tirunelveli A. I. R.

Each pillar is made of a big rock stone. There is a big pillar in the centre surrounded by a cluster of pillars 48 in number. These small rounded pillars produce musical notes.

An inscription records that in Kollam 721, certain additions were made to the mantapam in front of the central shrine by Sangili Veera Martandan Siraivai Muthavar<sup>18</sup>. If assumed that these were the pillars added by the Kerala King, then these are older than the pillars of the Suchindrum Temple as they belong to 1798 A. D.

There are two musical pillars in the temple of Kanthimathi in which a squirrel is carved as though it is going to catch the squirrel in another pillar, perhaps to show the relationship between the two "Swaras".

These pillars like other pillars support the roof but at the same time bear testimony for the beauty of architecture and produce musical notes.

The padmabandam, kalasam, tadi, kutam, palagai, kandan pothigai and the yalis on the top of these pillars are beautifully carved.

### **Sankilimantapam :**

The two temples of Siva and his consort are connected by the corridor known as Sankilimantapam, which was constructed in 1674 A. D. by Vadamalaiyappa Pillai. This begins from the Southern gateway of southern side of the outer prakara and ends at the temple of the Goddess. This is 30' wide and 300' long. On either sides of this passage are beautiful pillars and sculptures of Hanuman, Arjuna and Bheema.

There are small shrines of Goddess Manjanavadvimala and Sastha.

The central gateway is in the northern side and the mantapa in the southern side of the central gateway and was constructed by the brothers of Vadamalaiyappa Pillai and the place except the northern prakara was built by Vadamalayappa Pillai and the northern prakara was built by brothers-in-law of Vadamalayappa Pillai and the public.<sup>19</sup>

This prakara is called Seepalimantapam and the stone pillars support the mantapa and the flooring is of stone.

#### **Unjalmantapam in the temple of Kanthimathi:**

The Mantapa is supported by twenty four pillars with yalis. There are 96 pillars altogether in this mantapa and this was constructed by Sera Kulam Piravi Perumal Pillayan in 1635 A. D.<sup>20</sup>

#### **'Thousand Pillar Mantapam' in Kanthimathi Temple :**

This mantapa in the temple of Kanthimathi has many beautiful pillars with the sculptures of Ganesha and Rati. As Fergusson says this is a forest of pillars and it would have added charm if the number was lessened and arranged in the style of Chalukya or Jain Temple.<sup>21</sup> The length of this mantapam is 520' and breadth is 63'.

Thalavoi Alagappa Mudaliar constructed the northern and 3/4 th of western side besides thousand pillared mantapa and the rest of the portion and northern side was the contribution of Thirumalayappa Pillayan.<sup>22</sup>

The four sides of the tank were constructed by Venkatakrishna Mudaliar in 1756 A. D. Alayam Thanappa Mudaliar, Thiruvavaduthurai Adheenam and Dharmapuram Adheenam and the steps were renewed recently by a devotee by name Kerpuram Panividai Siva Surya Paradesi.

#### **Arumuga Nainar Temple :**

This temple is situated in the third prakara in the southern side and was built by Vadamalayappa Pillaiyan in 1642 A.D.<sup>23</sup>.

This shrine has a sanctum sanctorum, arthamantapa and mahamantapa with the pillars of yalis. The deity and the temple became popular by the service of a devotee called Amavasa<sup>i</sup> Paradesi and all the poojas and festivals are performed to this deity and Skandasasti is an important festival celebrated and this comes to an end with the marriage of Devasena on the 7th day.

The deity with his consorts Valli and Devasena is hewn beautifully of the same stone. The bronze of this deity is in a small shrine in the temple of Kanthimathy and the statue of Arai Alagappa Mudaliar is at the back of this shrine.

### **Gopurams (Gateways) :**

The gateway in the temple of Kanthimathy in the eastern gate was constructed in 1626 A.D, which is a beautiful one. There are four gateways in the temple of Nellaiappar which were constructed in 1606 A.D, and bear the statues of Gods and Goddesses made of Sudhai.

The ambalam (space in front of the gateway) of Kanthimathy temple was constructed by Thirisirapuram Sivaramakasia Pillai.

The dwajasthambam was erected in 1554 A.D. and the Car Festival first commenced in 1504 A.D. and The Golden Car Festival started in 1647 A.D.<sup>24</sup>

All these bear testimony that the temple complex expanded and grew into a larger complex in the 16th - 17th century A.D.

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### **3. SCULPTURES**

The Pandyas, like their Pallava contemporaries encouraged rock cut sculptures for which the bas reliefs at Thirupparankunram Anaimalai and Tiruchirappalli are excellent examples.

There are few bas reliefs on the walls of the first prakara.

#### **Lingodhbhava :**

There is small bas relief of Lingodhbhava seen on the western wall of the sanctum between the makarathoranas. It is a beautiful relief with brahma and Vishnu worshipping the Lord Shiva with folded hands.



### **Pandya King and Queen :**

There is a bas relief of a Pandya king and queen with a maid and goat on the wall in the first prakara behind the sanctuary and one with the king and queen in the northern side of the first prakara near Mula Mahalingar shrine. The face of king and queen is rounded and the knee cap is visible. Yagnopavida is thick and no ornament around the neck of the queen. There is no veil covering the upper portion of the body of the queen.

The Pallava sculptures of Gods and Goddesses and the people look alike. But the Chola sculptures are differentiated between the Gods and the people. Therefore the bas reliefs of Nellaiappar temple could be assigned to the Chola period.

### **Kalarimoorthy :**

This is found on the same wall in the same prakara. It is believed to be related with the legend of Swethakethu mentioned in the Sthalapurana. But it is hewn out with a man embracing the Linga and a man lying on the floor and Lord Shiva emerging from the Linga which could be attributed to the legend of Markandeya. It is very unfortunate that this relief is almost ruined.

There is another bas relief on Appar and Sambandar in the same prakara near the bas relief of the Pandya king and queen which also belongs to the Chola period.

### **Yogabogiswara :**

Lord Shiva is in the Yogasana form with his consort Parvati on his left and Nandigeswara is seen with the folded hands and the sages and their wives worshipping the Lord and Ganapathi. There is a small sculpture of hunter Kannappa trying to remove his eye with the arrow.

### **A King with the Parivars :**

This relief shows a king on a horse and a stately person on an elephant reminding the story of King Seraman going to Kailas with his friend Sundarar.

### **Ravana Lifting Mount Kailas :**

The most beautiful bas relief is that of Ravana lifting the Mount Kailas which could be assigned to 8th century A.D. This is on the right side of the entrance to Mahamantapa. Parvathi sitting on the lap of Lord Shiva, her face showing the fear and Ravana's hand lifting the mountain with an expression of pain.

### **Portrait Sculptures :**

The development of the art of pillars under the Nayaks is very remarkable. They took over some of the signs of the Cholas and introduced their style.<sup>1</sup> The shafts of the pillars in the Nellaiappar temple have life size statues portraying the kings of the Nayak dynasty, legendary heroes and the Gods which are notable for their beauty. Rati's ornament on the head proves that Chakkiya Koothu was in existence in the 17th century.

The shafts of the pillars in the southern side of outer prakaras consist of beautiful figures of Kuravan, Kurathi, Rati and Manmata. The pillars near the Somavara mantapa have Alli Arjuna and opposite to this a life size statue of a queen with her maid which is believed to be that of Pavalakodi. The sculptures of women are seen without upper garment and heavily ornamented. There is a sculpture consisting of 3 hands, 3 legs, 2 heads and 2 bodies in the Somavara mantapa.

At the entrance to the second prakara, there are four statues of Pagadai Raja, Veerabhadra, Karna and Arjuna. The change in the calf muscle of Veerabhadra's twisted leg is beautifully shown.

As one of the statues is seen with a cobra, it is said to be Karna's statue and the other holding a bow and an arrow is believed to be Arjuna. Some believe that this is the sculpture of Thirupurantaka which is not made according to the puranas.

In the southern side of the first prakara are the portrait sculptures of Naik rulers, with folded hands, the standing example for Naik style.

#### 4. POOJAS AND FESTIVALS AS DEPICTED AND THE INSCRIPTIONS OF NELLAIPPAPPAR TEMPLE

As Sangam literature throws light on the worship of the deities, there is no reference about the worship and poojas in the hindu temples. During the reign of the Pallavas, stone temples were constructed and the form of worship and the festivals were systematized in the period of the Cholas. One comes to know of the religion, irrigation, hero stone etc. only from the inscriptions. These inscriptions could be classified into six groups as lamps, Archana, festival, devadhanam, buildings and general income.<sup>1</sup>

##### Daily Poojas :

Usually the daily poojas were performed thrice a day as Sirukālai sandhi, Uchchi sandhi and Night sandhi. Arthajama sandhi is also mentioned in the some of the inscriptions Thiruanantal and Thiruppalli Eluchi are mentioned in a few.

|                       |                |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Sirukālai Sandi       | milk           | ARE 51 of 1927       |
|                       |                | S. I. I. Vol. V. 418 |
|                       | rudhram        | „ „ 422, 432         |
|                       | amudupadi      | „ „ 445              |
| KalaiSandhi           | rice cake      | A.R.E. 44 of 1927    |
| (Midday) Uchchi Sandi | Vedaadhyayanam | „ „ 78 of 1927       |
| Sandhyadeepam         |                | S. I. I. Vol. 434    |
| Arthajamam            |                | A. R. E. 51 of 1927  |
|                       |                | S I. I. Vol. 442     |
| Thiruaththajamam      |                | A. R. E. 63 of 1927  |
| Thiruppallieluchi     |                | 51 of 1927           |
| Thiruanantal          |                | A. R. E. 80 of 1927  |

Thirugnanam was chanted during Thiruppalli Eluchi.<sup>2</sup> Daily routine started from Thiruppalli eluchchi.

All these three sandis were observed in the Nellaiappar temple. Thirugnanam was chanted during thirupalli eluchi<sup>3</sup> Daily routine began from Thiruppalli eluchi and during Thiruanantal flowers and pavadai were offered to the deity. Srirudram was performed during early morning and Sandhayadeepam was burnt in the evenings (dusk),<sup>4</sup> Water for tirumanjanam was brought from the river as it is being done today.

Camphor, akil, chandan were offered to be smeared on the deity.<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to note that the same neivedhyam offered some 1300 years ago is being offered as Thiruamudhu today also.<sup>6</sup> It needs mention that almost all the inscriptions mention the same kind of Thiruamudhu since the Pallava period.<sup>7</sup> Rice, dhal, salt, pepper, coconut, karuppukatti (jaggery) to make rice cakes were given for amudhupadi during these sandhis in the 34th regnal year of Mar. Kulasekaradeva I<sup>8</sup> Amudhupadi, Sathupadi, Tiruvilakku, Thirumalai, Ilayamudu, Adai-kayamudu, are mentioned in the 13th regnal year inscription of Mar. Sundara II<sup>9</sup>. Almost in all the inscriptions betel leaf and the nut are mentioned as adaikayamudu.<sup>10</sup>

### Birthday Poojas:

The kings and the high officials celebrated their birth days and offered thiruamudu to the deity on their natal star.

| Inscription                              | King or official  | Natal Star | Endowment or offerings    |
|--|-------------------|------------|---------------------------|
| S.I.I. Vol. V. 428 }<br>ARE 40 of 1927 } | Jat. Kulasekara I | Visakám    | land for thiruamudu.      |
| S.I.I. Vol. V. 432                       | Jat. Sundara I    | Moolam     | Rudram in Sirukalai Sandi |
| S.I.I. Vol. V. 431                       | Malavarayan       | Sathayam   | Thiruamudu                |
| S.I.I. Vol. V. 412                       | Kandiyathevar     | Chitrai    | Thiruamudu                |

Sandhis were made in the names of the Kings.

|                            |                    |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Veera Pandyan Sandhi       | S I.I. Vol. V. 408 |
| Kancheepuram Kondan Sandhi | A.R.E. 62 of 1927  |
| Ramavaruma Sandhi          | S.I.I. Vol. V. 409 |

### Special Poojas:

Arrangements were made for special poojas on auspicious days like Vishu in Aypasi Chitrai, Sivarathri and Thirukarthigai

| Days           | Deity                                       | Inscription        |
|----------------|---|--------------------|
| Karthigai      | Car Festival                                | S.I.I. Vol. V. 430 |
|                | Subramanya Pillayar<br>& Nachchiyar         |                    |
| Attami         | Nelveli Udayanayanar &<br>Pollapillayar for | „ „ 426            |
|                | Abhishekam                                  |                    |
| Thirukarthigai | Periyadeva Muthaliyar                       | „ „ 445,           |
| Sivarathri     | & Nachiyar                                  |                    |
| Chitrai Vishu  |   |                    |
| Amavasai       | Anavaratatana<br>Perumal Adhyayanam         | A.R.E. 57 of 1927  |

Sankam literature and Thevaram clearly give an account of the festivals. It was a tradition to take out the uthsavabera In the temple new icons were made and bronze of saiva samayacha were installed and arrangements were made for poojas and festivals.

| Donor                     | Bronzes  | Inscription        |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Nakkan Alagiya<br>Perumal | Subramanya Pillayar<br>and Nachchiyar          | S.I.I. Vol. V. 430 |
| Venadudayar               | Aludaiya Pillai                                | „ „ 440            |
| Sankili Veera             | Aruvathumuvar and                              | A.R.E. 56 of 1927  |
| Martanda Varman           | nine saits                                     |                    |
| Vilupatharayar            | Alagiya Tirucitrambalam<br>udayar              | S.I.I. Vol. V 439  |
| Koothanvali<br>Pillai     | Periya Theva Muthaliyar<br>and Nachchiyar      | „ „ 445            |
| Krishnappa Naik           | Visvanatheswaram<br>Udayar at Sindhupoonthurai | „ „ 410            |
| Devangal<br>Thampiratti   | Suttamalli Nachiyar<br>Temple                  | A.R.E. 57 of 1927. |

Girls were appointed to sing and dance in the shrines during the poojas and the instrumentalists to play on the instruments during the service were also appointed<sup>10</sup>. Musicians were there to do service during the nritha ceremony.

### **Perpetual Lamps :**

People made arrangements to burn perpetual lamps in the temple to gain athma gnanam and progress in life. Almost all the temples were given perpetual lamps which was considered to be the best endowment. Gold was offered to burn the lamps. Lands were also donated for this purpose. But mostly goats and cows were given to the shepherds for the supply of ghee to the temple to burn the lamps<sup>12</sup>. The donar himself appointed a supervisor to be responsible for this endowment. Usually the Mahasabha took the responsibility to which the money or endowment in kind was given.

The lamps are classified as perpetual lamps, day lamps and sandhi lamps. It is clearly recorded in the inscriptions regarding the donar, the kind of endowments to burn the lamp, time, person responsible and the care taker of the lamp. Mostly the royal people including women offer perpetual lamps to the temple and next to them came the brahmins of the sabha or as individuals donating perpetual lamps.

Today the same procedure follows. But the rituals are being observed six times a day. Poojas and festivals are celebrated according to the Kanukagama.

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4. S.I.I. Vol. V. 449
5. Nagasamy R., Kallum Shollum, Madras 1977, P. 144.
6. Ibid
7. S.I.I. Vol. V. 445

8. Ibid-408
9. Nagasamy R. opp. cit P. 145
10. A.R.E. 35 of 1927, 42 of 1927, 50 of 1927, 54 of 1927, 67 of 1927, 86 of 1927.
11. S.I.I. Vol. V. 425
12. Ibid 451, 452, 426.

## **5. THE ROLE OF THIRUNELVELI IN THE PROGRESS OF SAIVAISM IN SOUTH INDIA**

Religious Renaissance brought into lime light the growth of Saivism and Vaishnavism in the golden age of the Cholas. Stone temples were constructed and as a result art and architecture developed. The sculpture of the deities in their various forms were not only the symbols of the various styles, they also taught the philosophy of religion. Poojas and festivals were performed regularly in which the kings and the people participated with zeal and enthusiasm and gave gifts to the temples. Rajaraja the Great, made arrangements to chant Thirumurai in the temples and the dancing girls to sing and dance in the temples. He was responsible for the composition of ragas to the Thirupatigams.

### **Chanting of Thirupathigams**

As a result from the beginning of 9th century onwards, chanting of Thirupathigam in the temples began and in the 10th century this grew into the worship of Saivasamayachars and reached its zenith in the 13th century. Lands were endowed for chanting Thirupathigam to 27 temples approximately in the south.<sup>2</sup> The tradition of chanting the Thirupathigams in the temple for the past 1000 years revealing the culture and religious attitude is unknown to the other parts of the country. This tradition was encouraged by the kings and the people and became an institution itself. Chanting of Thirupathigam must have started in the period of Vijayanandi Vikrama period itself.<sup>3</sup>

This tradition slowly disappeared after the decline of the Cholas and Pandyas, even though the Vijayanagar Kings showed interest and tried to revive this cult.

Hence from the 14th Century onwards the Saiva mutts took interest in the growth of religion. They brought several temples under their administration and made arrangements to sing Thirumurai in the temples and it continues till date with same zeal and interest.

The inscriptions from the 9th century to 13th Century mention Thirupathigams. Thiruvoimozhi was also known as Thirupathigam in the 10-11th centuries. The Kings, high officials and the people contributed for this service. Endowments were made for the recital of Thirupathigams in the temple.

The inscriptions prove that mostly the ascetics only chanted Thirupathigams in the temples. A record in the 15th regnal year of Mar. Sundara Pandya-II records the gift of tax free lands to 11 ascetics who recited Thirupathigam in the Nellaiappa temple for their boarding and lodging. The chanters of Thirupathigam were called Thirugnanam Othumper<sup>4</sup> and perhaps this othumper only later changed to Othuvar. The chanters are called 'Pidarar' in the inscriptions of Rajaraja.<sup>5</sup> The people who chanted Thirugnanam were not only ascetics they belonged to a particular Gotram (sect) and these ascetics are found scattered throughout Tirunelveli District. It could be assumed that during the 13th century there spread a branch of Saivism in the name of Golaki and the essence of the religion is Thirugnanam and its related with Thirugnana-Sambandar.<sup>6</sup>

### **Golaki Mutt and Thirugnanam**

There were a number of mutts in Tirunelveli District. During the 13th regnal year of Mar. Sundara Pandya II tax free gift of land was given to Aludayan Ananda kuttan to recite Thirugnanam early morning Thirupalli Eluchi service, in the temple of Thirukkamakottam Nachiar in the temple of



Thirunelveli Udaiyar.<sup>7</sup> During the third regnal year of Veera Pandya, Saiva Brahmins of Thiruvaliesvaram temple made an agreement with one Pugali Perumal of Golaki mutt Gnanacharya Santhanam to recite Thirugnanam.<sup>8</sup>

### **Thirugnanam**

The scholars no doubt are of the opinion that Thirugnanam is of religious importance though it is not clear what the Thirugnanam speaks or who the author was. Some scholars consider that this is a hymn sung by one of the samayachars.<sup>9</sup> Inscriptions in the 28th regnal year of Rajendra III and the third regnal year of Rajaraja mention Thirugnanasambandar as Thirugnanam Per̥ṭa Pillayar.<sup>10</sup> So one has to assume that thevaram of Thirugnanasambandar was Thirugnanam as Sekkilar also mentions that Thirugnanasambandar got 'sivagnanam' when he drank the milk given by Goddess Parvati.<sup>11</sup>

Some scholars opine that Thevaram sung by the three Samayachars namely Thirunavukkarasar, Thirugnanasambandar and Sundarar is Thirugnanam, as Kazhi Thandavaraya in his commentary on Thiruvāsaga mentions Thevaram as 'Thirumegnana Thiruneri Thevaram and Thirumegnana Thiruneri Tamil'.<sup>12</sup> Dr. Rajamanickam assumes that this was a composition of one of the Saivacharyar of Golaki mutt<sup>13</sup>.

Inscription of Thirubuvanecakravarti Konerinmaikondan in his 5th regnal year mentions the name of an ascetic as Chokkan Nayakkan Gnanam Per̥ṭar.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore it could be ascertained that the name of a religious book was Thirugnanam and the people were called by his name.

### **Golaki Mutt**

Visveswara Sambu was the first to have founded Golaki Mutt in South India. The members of this mutt belonged to Pasupata, Lagulisa Pasupata and Kalamuka. Brahmecharis of these sects only learnt Vedas, Agamas and Philosophy. They belonged to various parts of the country and went to various places and founded Mutts to which belong the mutts in the south.

There were teachers in these mutts to teach vedas, literature and Agamas; dancing girls to sing and dance thereby encouraging fine arts; instrumentalists, physicians and servants. More or less the same arrangements were prevailing in the mutts in the south.

Golaki mutts had various santhanams (sub-sects) as given below.<sup>15</sup>

|  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Vishakanda Thevar Santhanam                                  | Ellaiyila Thevar                  |
| Bhattveera Santhanam   | Mahadevar                         |
| Thiruvarur Vadakil }<br>Madattu Santhanam }                  | Sivapatha Hridayar Asthra<br>Deva |
| Bhiksha Mada Santhanam                                       | Neelakanta Thevar                 |
| Thirunelveli Maligai Maduttu }<br>Alagiya Nayaka Santhanam } | Uyyakonda Thevar                  |
| Thirunelveli Therkil Madattu }<br>Santhanam }                | Anukka Vantondar                  |

Therefore it is clear that Golaki had a number of sub divisions known as Santhanams and the Golaki mutts were situated in Thiruvarur, Madurai and Thirunelveli and the Bhiksha Matam also belonged to Golaki Mutt.

As the Heads like Agora Sivacharya and Esana Sivacharya had relationship with the Bhiksha Mutt this Golaki Mutt seems to be a Saiva Siddhanta Mutt.

Dr. Rajamanickam opines that the Golaki Mutt Sivacharyas were the Deeksha gurus of Kalasuriya, Kakathiyas, Maluvas and Teluguchodas during Chola period and as the affixes of the Golaki mutt Sivacharyas were Sambu and Sivam, it could be assumed that the Rajagurus of the Cholas also belonged to Golaki Mutt.<sup>16</sup>

### **Worship of Saiva Samayachars**

During Pallava period itself people started regarding the Saiva Samayachars as a number of devotees are being mentioned in the Thevaram and this cult of worshipping the devotees would have grown during the reign of the Cholas. People were enthusiastic to worship the four Saiva Samayachars and they felt proud to be named after them. Appoothi Adigal named his children and all

his possessions after Thirunavukkarasu. There are number of inscriptions to record this cult and the people were named after the Saiva Samayachars till 13th century A.D.

One of the signitary's name in the inscription of Veera Pandya's 4th regnal year is found to be Seraman Tholan<sup>17</sup> and an ascetic in the one of the mutts in Tirunelveli was named Anukka-vantondan<sup>18</sup>. These two names denote Sundara. There was a mutt in the name of Alala Sundarar where an ascetic was called Seynalur Thiruvenkadu Udayan.<sup>19</sup> There were some mutts in the name of these Saiva Samayachars which were the boarding and lodging for the pilgrims.

A Kerala king by name Sangili Veeramarthanda Varman Siraivai Muthavar when he was staying at Seravan Madev; made a gift of two paṟṟus Virapandiappereri Palarmudi tavarthan in Kunrathur paṟṟu for conducting the service called Sankili Vira Marthandan sandi in the shrine of Tirunelveli Udayar and Tirukkamakottam Nachiyar<sup>20</sup> in the year 721 i.e. 1546 A.D. His another Kollam inscription states that the copper images of the Aruvattumuvar and nine other saints were made and festivals conducted for them and that certain additions were made to the mantapam in front of the central shrine<sup>21</sup>.

In the 12th and 13th centuries Saiva Siddhanta an essence of the Agamas and the principles which are found in Thirumanthiram, the first book of Saiva Siddhanta became popular.

So it could be ascertained that the Golaki was spread in the South; the cult of worshipping the Saiva devotees was encouraged and as a result Saiva mutts sprang upto probagate religious deeds and spread Saiva philosophy.

### **Ganapathy Cult**

Endowments were made to the deity Pollapillayar enshrined in the second prakara to offer cake offerings at the morning service<sup>22</sup>, to do abhishekam on atta days and also to burn lights.<sup>23</sup>

### **Ekadandi Ascetics**

Tax free bhikshabogam for feeding the Ekadandi ascetics in the temple was given and an exemption of certain taxes

payable to the temple was made during Virapandya deva.<sup>24</sup> These Ekadandis were the foremost among the ten sects of asceticism founded by Sankara in the 8th Century.

### **Srirudram**

Performing Sri rudram was very common in the mid period. Arrangements were made to perform Srirudram in the early morning for which lands were endowed and to feed twelve persons who performed Srirudram on the birth day of Mar. Sundara Pandya I whose natal star was moola, tax free lands were endowed.<sup>25</sup>

To conclude, during the reign of medieval Pandyas worship of Ganesa was prevalent; Srirudram was performed in the temple of Nellaiappar, the presiding deity. Thirugnanam was chanted and Golaki religion was popular in the South.

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4. S.I.I. Vol. V. 420, 421.
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6. Swamy B.G.L., opp. it p. 105.
7. A.R.E. 68 of 1927.
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10. A.R.E. 216 of 1908; 149 of 1927
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13. Rajamanickanar, Saiva Samaya Valarchi, p. 204 footnote 55.
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16. Rajamanickanar, opp. cit p. 216.
17. S.I.I. Vol. V. 433:
18. Ibid. 420.
19. Ibid. 422.
20. A.R.E. 59 of 1927.
21. Ibid. 56 of 1927.
22. Ibid. 44 of 1927, 47 of 1927.
23. S.I.I. Vol. V. 423, 426
24. A.R.E. 72 of 1927
25. S.I.I. Vol. V. 423, 432.

## 6. TEMPLE AND SOCIETY

The temples in the south played an important role in the development of socio economic conditions of the country which could be read from the inscriptions.

The inscriptions in the temple record the endowments such as lands, lamps, gold and paddy which has become a tradition. Very few inscriptions only records the orders of the king regarding the administration of the temple.

The lands that were donated to the brahmin scholars to recite Vedas were called Brahmadeyam or Chaturvedimangalam. Thirunelveli is called a Keezhvembunattu Devadana Brahmadeyam Kulasekara Chaturvedimangalam.<sup>1</sup> During the reign of Mar. Kulasekara Pandya II, land was given to Vaishnava brahmins called Agaram by the workers in the Kulasekara Chaturvedimangalam<sup>2</sup>. Land was donated by one Sundaran Kolari alias Tondaiman of

Malaimandalam kovil for founding a brahmin village named Ravivarma Chaturvedimangalam in the name of the king.<sup>3</sup> Anavaradhadana Chaturvedimangalam was founded in the name of the deity.<sup>4</sup>

Bosala Veera Somideva Chaturvedimangalam was founded by Maravarman Sundara Pandya in his 10th regnal year in the name of his uncle.<sup>5</sup> This was actually endowed as tax free bhiksha-bhogam for feeding the Ekadandi ascetics.

The Brahmadeyas mentioned in the inscription of the Nellaiappar temple.

|   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| Thirunelveli - Keezh Vembanattu Devadanam   | S.I.I. Vol. V 449       |
| "    "    Thirunelveli Kula                 | }      " "    441       |
| Sékara Chaturvedimangalam                   |                         |
| Anavaradadana Chaturvedimangalam            |                         |
| Sermadevi - Seran Mahadevi                  | }      " "    418       |
| Chaturvedimangalam                          |                         |
| Suddavalli - Melvembanattu Suddavalli       | }    A.R.E. 44 of 1927  |
| Veeravinodha Chaturvedimangalam             |                         |
| Mullinattu Rajaraja Chaturvedimangalam      | }    S.I.I. Vol. V 431  |
| Marappanadu - Bosala Veera                  | }      " "    448       |
| Chaturvedimangalam                          |                         |
| Paruththipadu- Sundara Pandya               | }      " "    429       |
| Chaturvedimangalam                          |                         |
| Kannanur - Maheswara Chaturvedimangalam     | }      " "    429       |
| Keelvembanattu Ravivarma Chaturvedimangalam |                         |
| Udayapiratti Chaturvedimangalam             | }    S.I.I. Vol. V. 446 |
| Ravivarma Chaturvedimangalam                | }    A.R.E. 72 of 1972  |
| Senalur - Thiruvaranga                      |                         |
| Chaturvedimangalam                          | }    S.I.I. Vol. V. 448 |

### Mahasabha

The mahasabha consisted of the members of the chaturvedimangalam and this mahasabha only was responsible for the administration of the village and the temple. But of this was

administered in the name of Chandiswara and all the endowments were registered in the name of Chandiswara only.

This Mahasabha only was responsible for the credit and debit and disposal of the lands for the endowments made and levied duty etc<sup>6</sup>. The lands were given on lease ; coolies were appointed ; the activities in the temple were supervised and all these were recorded in the names of the donors by the mahasabha.

Brahmadeyam meant that the temple and the village functioned jointly and a village without a temple was not given any importance.

### **Impact of the Temple in the Religious Aspect of the People :**

The kings, high official and the public came forward to donate various kinds of offerings to God since the Sankam period, and after religious renaissance this tradition of making endowments was recorded. The kings made arrangements for sandi pooja on their birthdays, gave gifts of lands and made tax free lands endowed by others. Jat. Kulasekara II endowed lands to Tirunelveli Udayanayanar on his natal star Visakam<sup>7</sup>. Jatavarma Sundara Pandya-I gave ornaments to the temple of Nellaiappar<sup>8</sup>. Mar Kulasekara Pandya-I constructed the enter prakara wall of the temple from the booty obtained from the Kerala, Chola and Hoysala kings<sup>9</sup>. A queen by name Dharanimulududayal founded a garden in her name and gave a gift of 5 ma to the five gardeners<sup>10</sup>. Arikesari Parakrama Pandya gave a golden vessel to the deity who sprang up a from bamboo<sup>11</sup>. A Sera King by name Venru Mankonda

Boothala Veeravarman endowed land for Ramavarma sandi<sup>12</sup> Sanaili Veeramarthandan made two Paṇṇus for Veeramarthandan sandhi and was responsible for some additions in the shrines copper images of the aruvathumuvar and nine other saints<sup>13</sup>. Krishnappa Naik constructed a temple in the name of his father Visvanatha Naik, Vishvanatheesvaramudayaṛ and made sandhi and donated lands to conduct Mahotsavam in Avani, Moolam and perform daily poojas<sup>14</sup> and abhishekam every month of Mrigasirisha day.

The High officials too made arrangements to perform poojas on their birthdays. Brahmins, weavers, vellalars,

shepherds, vaisyas called Nagarattars too joined hands with the kings and officials and offered what they could to the temple. They renewed the rituals which were stopped during the claim for the throne<sup>15</sup>. Two individuals donated land for the maintenance of chatram at Kalakkadu and for providing offerings and worship to the image of Venkateswara Perumal in the temple<sup>16</sup>.

### **The Temple & Devaradiyars:**

As in the period of Pallavas and Cholas, the dancing girls were appointed to sing and dance in the anantal and thirupalli ezluchchi. As they were the servants, of Gods they were called Devaradiyars. These people were religious - minded and made endowments to the temples. The dancers of the Nellaippar temple were not only rich but highly religious-minded, also. A dancing girl called Nakkan Urimai Alagiya Perumal Thalaikoli gave copper bronzes of Lord Subramanya, Valli and devasena and donated land for providing offerings to the deity and lamps. She made arrangements to draw the car of god Subramanya on Krithigai<sup>17</sup>. A dancer called Bagavathi Erutiruvudaiyal got lands and house sita for her service in the temple<sup>18</sup>. A dancing girl Alagudanadum Perumal Palliyarai Nachiyar was renamed Periya Nattumanikkam and that certain perquisites were granted to her for her service in the temple<sup>19</sup>.

### **Temple-School of Fine Arts**

Hence the temple became an institution itself as the dancing girls were appointed to sing and dance and the instrumentalists were also appointed and given land and house<sup>20</sup>. The place where the dramas were staged was called Alagia Pandyan Kudam and the drama was known Thirunatakam. The very name shows that the dramas from puranas only were staged and the land that was donated to the dramatists was called 'Koothukani'<sup>21</sup>. All these were performed in the presence of the deity during poojas and festivals.

### **Temple-A Vedapatasala**

As the Brahmadeya insisted the welfare of the Brahmins, to learn mantras and to recite vedas, the temple became a



school, Chanting mantras, performing Srirudram, singing and dancing became a regular custom in the daily rituals and poojas<sup>22</sup>. There were scholars to chant Thirugnanam and perform Srirudram. The mutts of the temple became boarding and lodging of the pilgrims and the poor.

### **Economic condition :**

The village life centered around the temple and the administration went on smoothly. Large amount of money had to be spent to burn the perpetual lamps, to make adhyayanam and for sandhi etc. As a consequence lands were donated. Goats and cows were donated to burn the lamps and for abhisheka. Most of the inscriptions denote the endowments of lands only, though paddy and rice were also donated. The stone to show the border of the land of Shiva temple was called Thirisoolakal.

The people who were in the service of the temple also were given land as service tenure and this was called jeevitham, bhogam and kani.

### **Lands given to those**

|                          |                        |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| who performed poojas     | Bhattavriti            |
| for adhyayance           | Adhyayanavriti         |
| for chanting Thirugnanam | Gnanapuram             |
| for performing Srirudram | Srirudhradhyayanapuram |
| Temple endowment         | Thiruvidayattam        |
| lands endowed to mutts   | Matapuram              |

All these were registered in the name of Chandeswara and were taken care of by the temple and supervised by the Mahasabha the government.

The lands were given on lease and the person had to enjoy the product and income from the land after giving the share to the temple.

People will naturally go to the temple with offering such as flower, coconut, camphor, betel leaf etc. and hence the shops sprang up. The temple also buys camphor, cardamom and other ingredients for the poojas and festivals from these

shops. Thus business flourished. So in the same manner the Nellaiapper temple has become a place of worship, a Veda-patasala, a school of fine arts, a treasury, a place to give justice, a public place and a fort to safeguard the people during hardships and thus played a pivotal role in the socio-economic condition of the country.

Date of the Bronzes in the Nellaiappar Temple as assumed by the Dept. of Archaeology, Madras.

| <b>Items</b>                        | <b>location where situated</b> | <b>Date A.D.</b> |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Pandayaraja                         | Somaskandar Room               | 11—12            |
| Manonmani                           | Sancrum Sanctuary              | 11—12            |
| Sundara &<br>Seraman Perumal        | —                              | 12—13            |
| Perumal                             | near the Sanctum Sanctuary     | 13—14            |
| Somaskandar                         | Somaskandar Room               | 14—15            |
| Anavaradadanar with<br>Piriyavidai  | —                              | 15               |
| Seebalinatha &<br>Goddess           | —                              | 15—16            |
| Manikavacagar                       |                                | 16               |
| Bhavani                             | Mahamantapam                   | 16               |
| Chandrasekara                       | Mahamantapam                   | 16               |
| Kangalanathar                       |                                | 16               |
| Soundara Sabapathy                  | Uthsavar Sannadhi              | 16               |
| Sivakami                            | Uthsavar Sannadhi              | 16—17            |
| Idampuri Vinayagar                  |                                |                  |
| standing picture                    | —Somaskandar Room              | 16—17            |
| Subramanya with<br>Valli & Devasena | —Somaskandar Room              | 16—17            |
| Tambra Sabapathy                    |                                |                  |
| Sivakami                            | —Mahamantapam                  | 16—17            |
| Kanthimathi                         | Uthsavar Sannadhi              | 16—17            |

|                     |                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Periya Sabapathy,   |                          |
| Sivakami &          | 16—17                    |
| Karaikalammai       |                          |
| Arumuganayanar      | Temple of Kanthimathi 16 |
| Valli & Devasena    | 16—17                    |
| Thirugnanasambandar | 17                       |
| Mohini              | 18                       |

— Courtsey Dept. of Archaeology, Madras

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6. Ibid 413, 416, 411.
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# **The Holy Shrine of Srirangam**

**Dr. A. Gopinath**

Sri Rangam Temple is the Chief Shrine of Vaishnavites. The word 'Temple' itself denotes Chidambaram Temple for Saivaites and SriRangam Temple for Vaishnavaites. The SriRangam Temple is the chief among the 108 great Shrines (Thirupathi) of Vaishnavaites. We shall now discuss in this essay the location of this temple, its construction, its history, Moolavar (the Idol preserved in the Sanctum Sanctorum), Uthsavar (the idol which is taken out in procession), the minor deities present in the temple, the manner of worship, the Neivedhya offered to God, the holy doctrines underlying the structure of this temple the art and architecture, ornaments, festivals, library and the museum.

## **Place of the temple :**

SriRangam can be reached from Trichi through Mamphazha Salai and Thiruvannaikka — crossing a distance of six kilometers. The environs of the road to SriRangam has a lot of greenery on either side—an abundance of coconut, mango and Jack fruit trees around. The temple lies on an isle, surrounded by the River Kaviri on one side and Kollidam, on the other. The 'Sthalam' or Holy place, which lies about 320 kilometers south of Madras has a railway station too to the convenience of the pilgrims.

One or other festival is celebrated almost through out the year. Truly 322 out of 365 days contain some sort of local festival. Pilgrims from all over India, from places like Nepal and Kashmir for North, from Kanyakumari in the south gather everyday here. Many come from foreign countries. They come from foreign countries. They come to terms with the sanctity of the temple, understand its greatness and enjoy its artistic and architectural elegance. It is happy to note that recently the number of tourists from foreign lands has increased.

It is customary to refer to the temples at SriRangam, SriRengapatnam, Appakkudathan Sannidhi, Thiru Kudanthai and Thiruvinthalur as Pancharanga temples. The great Lord Ranga appears as Kasthuri Ranga, Kaveri Ranga, Kalyana Ranga, Parimala Ranga and Hema Ranga in these holy places on the banks of Holy Kaviri.

Old Tamil Literature speaks of ancient sthalas (Vaishnava Grihas or Vinnagars), Thiru Ekambam (or Kanchi), Thirumal Kunram (or Azhagar koil), Thiruvengatam (or Tirupati), Thiruvananthapuram (or Trivandrum) and Thiruvarangam (SriRangam) are these places. Among these SriRangam is very special. This place got the name SriRangam because once the Holy Vimana - the SriRenga Vimana of Vishnu stuck to this place. An Isle lying in the midst of the winding branches of a river is called 'Arangam' in Tamil. Hence it is apt this 'Holy Arangam' is called 'Thiru Arangam' in Tamil which is made SriRangam into Sanskrit. Some opine that this place is called an Arangam as the Lord who occupies the Vaikunta or Thiruparkkadal (The Holy Ocean of Milk), The Solar Circle (Surya Mandala) and the lotus like hearts of Saints desires to stay here especially. It could also have been called an Arangam as Thirumagal (The Goddess Lakshmi) dances here for the enrichment of benefit of SriVaishnavas here.<sup>1</sup>

SriRangam lies in between the two rivers Kaviri and Kollidam just as the 'Sushumna Nadi lies between the two Nadis Ida and Pingala within our nervous system. The Shrine which is the Sadhanalaya with seven Praharas denotes the principle of Sathyalaya, the human body or human enshrinement of the Lord. Hence it heads the other Divya Desas (or special Shrines) it is called the Talai Arangam (Head Shrine).

### **The Temple's Construction :**

The temple is Big - not only in the sense of fame or Kirti but also in the area of occupation. It extends over an area of half a square mile. It contains Seven pathways (or Praharas) and 21 (Gopuras (Towers) of various heights. It has been built by various kings extending over a period of

many centuries. As the Lord Himself is 'Anadhi' so the dwelling place of HIM is also Anadhi. We cannot fix the line of origin of the Temple.

The first prahara (The rectangular pathway around the Garbagraha) is called Thiruvnnazhi Pradhakshana. The second is called Raja Mahendra pradhakshana; The third is Thora-pradhakshana; the fourth prahara is the pathway to Thayar (Naachior) Sannidhi. The fifth prahara was once a grove which is reminiscent in its name Pakshirajan grove. The sixth prahara consider of the uthira veechis and lastly the outermost seventh prahara has the Chitthira veechis in it.

Originally, there were no habitations around the temple. Only the hereditary successors of the five Nambis were around the temple. Among the five Nambis, the first Nambi - Pattai Nambi - was incharge of the priesthood; the second - Peria Kovil Nambi - had the administrative responsibility and was incharge of the key; the third Satha Nambi was the internal guard in the duties taking Pantham (Torch) and flowers; the fourth - Uthama Nambi had the responsibility of performing Ekantha Kainkarya; the last-Peria Nambi was the Chief and he was the Guru of the Great teacher Ramanuja. These were the people originally living around the temple.

The South Gopura of the temple is being built with thirteen Nilais (Storeys of Tower) and thirteen copper kumbas to be the highest gopura in Asia. The rough estimate of expenditure is 109 lakhs of rupees. It is now in the final stages now. Two hundred persons work everyday for the accomplishment of this task. This work started on 20th May 1979. The tower is expected to be finished within the month of December, this year 1984. At present the tower has risen to a height of 222½ feet. About 2900 tons of cement, 52 tons of iron bars and 115 lakhs of bricks have been used till now in the construction. Sri Akopila Mutt Jeeyar started the construction work. SriRangam Srimath Andavan Swamigal and Kanchi Jagadguru Sankaracharya Swamigal have been assisting in the progress of this work. The Tamil Nadu Government

and Andra Pradesh Government also come forward to help this work. The people of Trichi, Sri Rangam have also helped to raise a fund, Cine Musician Ilayaraja has also donated freely. The Kalasa Kumbhas have been donated by Kumbakonam Ranganathan Chettiar.

Electric winches are used in three places in the construction work - in the Southern side - Eastern side and in the third Storey. Two crushers are being used for cutting bricks and three electric motor pumps to pump water above.

The construction of the tower was started originally 300 years back by the emperor of Vijayanagar Achutha Devaraya but it was dropped in the middle. Hence it was known as Mottai Gopuram (unfinished Tower). It was also called Raya Gopuram in his memory.

The Garbagraha (Sanctum Sanctorum) and the seven praharas (Verandhas) around it have been built according to the Silpa Shastra. We can see the sculptures of the Avatharas (Incorantions) of Lord Vishnu and also of Alwars on the 21 Gopuras of the temple. The outer most three praharas of the seven are streets in which shops and houses have been built. The temple lies in an area of 1200' x 800' inside the praharas. There are many mandaphas and the shrines of minor deities around the main shrine. The minor shrines belong to the following deities: Koorathalwar, Nathamuni Alwar, Thondaradipodi Alwar, Vittala Krishnan, Thiruppannalwar, UAndal, Krishnan Amrita Garudan, Chokkapanai Hanuman, Udayavor, Parthasarathy, Chakarathalwar, Thirukachi Nambi, Garudalwar, Nammalwar, Thirumazhisai Alwar, Dvaja Sthampa Hanumans Senai Mudaliar, Ranganatha, Sannadhi Krishna, Thayar, Pattabirama, the first Alwars, Kothanda Rama, Bhoja Rama and Pillai Lokacharaya.

The following are the mandaphas (Halls) and entrance around the temple: Nanmughan Kottai Vasal (Entrance) The Four Pillared Mandapha, Ranga Vilas mandapha, Vasantha Mandapham, Karthigai Gopura Vasal, Garuda Mandapam, Arya Padal Vasal, Unjal Mandapham Thiruvanthikappu Mandapham, Nazhi-



ketan Vasal, Arjuna Mandapham, Killi Mandapham, Durai Mandapham, Paramabada Vasal, Thavittarai Vasal, Thousand pillared (Ayirankal Mandapham) Mandapham, Vellai Gopura Vasal, Sesharaya Mandapham.

Apart from these noteworthy places are Kalkampum (stone pillar) Devasthanam Office, Library, Museum, Sri Pandaram (the place where prasadam are sold) Shukravara room, Sandal paste room, Treasury, Thondamanmedu, Madapalli, Panniyarappodu (the kitchen where sweets are made), Thirukottaram (Store House).

### **Sri Rangan Temple Construction**

A glance at the structure of the Sri Rangan Temple will suggest that Brahmaha had been worshipping Perumal who "Thannale Than Ooruvam Payanthanai" "(தன்னாலே தன்னுருவம் பயந்தானாய்)" had made this divine presence in the world of truth making himself both Sri Rangan and "Ranga Vimanam". Ishwhu, son of Vaivaswatha Manu had made penance towards Brahmaha and as a result got Sri Ranga Vimanam and Sri Rangan gained His presence at Ayodhya and had been worshipping Him.

From his days up to the days of Sri Rama his descendants considered Sri Ranga Vimanam their family asset and were worshipping it devoutly. Later Lord Rama presented it to Vibishna on the occasion of his coronation Vibishna on his way to Lanka, installed it at the Sri Rangan Temple and also got up adonation and festival there acceding to the request of the monks (ascetics) there. Lord Sri Ranga liked this seat very much and so chose to remain here for ever.

Temple structures are of two Kinds viz., Body Structure and Heart structure. The Sri Ranga Temple has been constructed on the body structure model with Seven circles round it. This manifests the principle of the composition of the human body of seven elements. In both Saivism and Vaishnavism it is a common notion that the human body is the temple of God. Sri Rangan is one of those places which God Himself chose to stay in. The other such holy places are Thiruvengadam, Thothatri, Salakgramam, Nara Naaraana Ashram and Naimisam. The Sri Rangan Temple is of moorthy glory. Of the one hundred and eight

Vaishnava Temples, the Sri Ranganam Temple is the root and trunk and the others are its branches. Lord Sri Ranga is present here in the shape of Sutha with Thailakappu. He lies asleep on Aathiseshan as His bed. He is called, 'Azhakiya Manavalan (Beautiful Bridegroom), Nam Perumalal (our Lord Perumal) and Peria Perumal.

Along with Sri Ranga Perumal as Urchava Moorthy (Festival God) both Sri Devi and Boo Devi appear by. The right hand of Lord Ranganatha in the lying posture points the crown while the proformed left points the foot. The face faces the south. Each physical feature of Lord Sri Ranga in the lying posture signifies something. For the human body, the head is north and the foot is south. Aptly the SriRanganam Temple lies north-south.<sup>2</sup> Lord Sri Ranga lies facing Lanka in the South for two reasons : i) The South is a blessed land and (ii) Vibishna is his Votary.

The right hand, pointing crown, denotes the fact that God is the origin of all things and the Lord of all, Facing Lanka is to give refuge to and bless all those who like Vibishna, seek Him with thoughts of justice. The left hand, pointing the foot signifies the fact that God's feet are the only means of circumventing this life which is just like crossing the limitless ocean.

### **History of the Temple**

The history of the Sri Ranganam Temple is an ancient one. Like God's its period is incalculable. However its period is divided into Pre-Historical and Historical.

Particulars about temple have been arranged in order in 'Temple Notes' (Kovil Olugu) Professor Ramarao while referring to the 'Temple Notes' says 'Olugu' means 'notes' and Koil according to Vaishnavism denotes Sri Ranganam Temple and to strengthen this he quotes the notes on the Sirapuriswara Temple at Thanjavur.<sup>3</sup> The author or authors of 'Temple Notes' remains anonymous, It is said of period that the initial is called 'Kali Kaalam' and the later is called 'Saalivahana' Era. It is further said the Kalikaala years are false and the Saalivahana years correct to some extent. This is stated by Mr. Parthasarathy in 'Koil Olugu The style of koil olugu resembles 'Manippravala' style.<sup>4</sup>

Initially the temple and the mandapha were constructed by the Chola King. Dharma Varma round the Vimanam got by Vibishna. After him the temple was buried in the sand by floods when the later Chola King Kili Cholan or Killi Cholan visited the place he was wonder-struck to hear a parrot perched in a tree sing two hymns incessantly. He dug the place and to his great amazement found the temple with the Vimanam and later carried out many renovation works.

The next person to renovation works was Raja Mahendra Cholan and to this day there stands a 'Praharam' in his name.

Later next Nanda Chola a descendant of Dharma Varma, who lived in Nisulapuri or woriyur had no children. He prayed Lord Sri Ranganathan and his prayer was answered. He found a baby among the lotuses in lotus pool and brought her up. He named her Kamalvalli. When she disclosed her love for and desire to marry Lord, Sri Rangan he celebratad the marriage often consulting his ministers and also gifted his wealth to the temple. Accordingly many towers, mandaphas and gardens came up due to his efforts.

Kulasekara Perumal is the next King mentioned in Temple Notes. His jurisdiction extended over the Chera Chola and Pandya Kingdoms and there were his palaces in Woriyur, Madurai and Kolli. Like Nanda Chola, he married his daughter, Charakula Valli, to Sri Rangan and spent his large assests on temple renovation works.

During the 5th century A.D. a King from Bengal came with a huge sum to worship Sri. Rangan. His wealth was not accepted but he placed the wealth at the threshold and posted some guards and Brahmins by it. They pleased Sri Rangan with their ways and thus gained their king Lord Sri Rangan's grace. Even now the threshold is called 'Aryapadal Vaasal'.

King Thirumangai built walls round the temple raised the height of the temple and made garden. He built also Dasavathara Temple. A street in Sri Rangan is now called 'Aali Nadam Veethi'.

The temple notes next speaks about the renovation works of Cholendra Simman, Gangai Thevan Singanan Thanda Naicker and Agalangan alias Vikrama Cholan; Sundara Pandya under the popular name 'Pon Veintha Perumal' offered various ornaments studded with precious stones and also replaced certain parts of the temple with gold. He planted a golden flag pole and made some pooja vessels of gold. After him Kulothunga Chola also did many temple renovation works.

Once the Sultan of Delhi plundered the Sri Rangan Temple and carried the image of Sri Rangan to Delhi. His daughter Surathani fell in love with the lovely Sri Rangan and kept it in her bed chamber. Later the Sultan complied with the request of the learned from the south and allowed them to take the image back to Sri Rangan. The next morning, not finding the image, Surathani made for Sri Rangan reached and died there.

All efforts made by Sultan to trace the image proved futile. Three Kodavar guarded the image keeping it at the foot of Thirumalai. With the image being at Thirumalai for years, they opened the Sri Rangan temple with the permission of the Chola King and celebrated festivals with another Nachiar.

"After 59½ years of Perumal's image being outside two Irulars found the image near the spring at the foot of the Tirumalai. They knew the history through the old brahmin there and duly informed their King. The amazed king made it known to everybody. In the meanwhile Goppana Udayar, the aide of Harihararayar, came to the Tirumalai and Chenchī and this resulted in the two kings coming together. These two kings conquered the Moghuls and in 1293, Parithabi, Vaikasi 17th they inducted Peria Perumal along with Nachiar and conducted the consecrating ceremonies.

Yet it was doubtful if the Perumal present there was Azhakiya Manavala Perumal. But King Rajendra Chola made it clear that it was Perumal Himself by getting the prasada of wet cloth proved (tasted) by a dobhi.

The Lord graced the King by appearing in his dream. The King inducted Azhakiya Manavala Perumal and Sri Ranga Nachiar and he had the Delhi Sultan's daughter, Surathani painted and inducted in the room built in Raja Mahendran street of North East Thirunadai Palace. And also as in Delhi he made arrangements for offering bread, sweet dal and kichadi and also milk for Santhu Nachiar known as Boomi Nachiar. For this purpose Rajendra Chola gifted two villages.

In the history found in Temple Notes the most noteworthy person was Ramanujam, called Udayavar. More than half of the notes speaks about his fame, like the modifications he made in the temple, some important events and interesting anecdotes of his life<sup>5</sup>. The modification he made in the temple evoked opposition that culminated in an attempt to poison him to death. In the wake of this attempt on his life he resigned to a place called Thiruvellarai and had the Lord present there whom he was worshipping.

The people who opposed his works on the temple repented for their deeds and begged him back to Sri Rangam. His Visish-tathvaitham and his temple services went on side by side

A clock run by the flow of water was set in the temple and the temple works were carried out punctually. It is now known as Nazhi Kettan Vasal.

A separate dwelling place for animals like the elephant, the horse and the deer and birds like the parrot, the peacock and the dove was set apart inside the temple and these animals were looked after well. Separate places were allotted for the daily collection of essential things like flowers, fruits and perfumed articles. Provision was made for carrying out repairing works in the temple.

A cowshed was set up at Cholanga Nallur for the temple cows and five villages were converted into their pasture. Scholars like Garuda Vahana Pandithar, Peria Nambi Koora-thalwar, Amuthanar, Aachann Pillai, Nadathoor Ammal were honoured. They wrote Sri Ranga Mahathmiyam, Aswalyana

Suthras, Abasthamba, Pothyana Mimamsa, Vedanta Sutras Viyakaranas, Alawandor's Sthothra Rathina, Ramanujar's Bashyas and Kathiyath Thirayam.

The changes he made were continued for 200 years and over and some of them even to the present day. He divided the temple administration into ten sections. He built the Thanvantri Temple and changed the old Sri Vaikasana method into Sri Pancharatra method. Leaving the temple in the custody of Muthali Andan he went on a Digvijay expedition.

Ramanujam who was teased (tortured) by the Chola king called Kirumi Kanda Chola was accepted again by his own son. He has carved a niche for himself in the history of Sri Rangam, Ramanuja, Udayavar, Kovil Annan, Emperumanar, Bashyakarar and Yathi Rasar these are the additional names of Ramanujar who did Yeoman services to Vishishtathvaitham and to the Sri Rangam Temple.

Parasara Pattar, son of Koorathalwar became the leader of Vaishnavites. The compound wall in the Thiruvikrama Street, which was in a very bad condition in his days was renovated by Veera Sundara Brahma Rayan. Parasara Pattar wrote notes to Vishnu Sahashara Namam and Kasiki Puranam. After Pattar his brother, Vedaviyasa Pattar took up the profession of a prohit and read puranas in the temple.

After him the temple custody was in the hands of Nanjeeyar who was succeeded by Kooru Narayana Jeyar, the disciple of Koorathalwar.

The Sri Rangam Temple suffered during the invasion of Malikkabur in 1327. During this invasion the image of Azhakiya Manavalan was entrusted to pillai Logachariar by the leader Sri Ranga Rayan and the rest of the smaller portions of the temple were closed and covered by walls built round them. The image was kept at Jothishkudi for a month. Here died Pillai Logachariar. Then the Manavalan image was kept and worshipped at Thirumalirunjolai for one year. Then one year at Kozhikode. Afterwards this image and the statue of Nammalwar were taken to Thirumalai.

It is believed the invasion of Malikkabur extended from 1327 to 1371. Chenji was then under the reign of Koppanna Rayar an aide of Hariharar Bukkar. On his visit to Thirumalai he found the image there and took it to Chenji. He fought against the moghuls and defeated them easily. In 1371 A.D. in the month of Vaikasi of Parithabi year the various deities were restored to their due places.

It took ten years for Kambanan to defeat the Moghuls and chase them from Sri Rangam. After this victory some great preceptors of Vaishnavism like Uthamanambi established close contact with the kings of Vijayanagar. Harihararayar and his son Viruppanna Udayar glorified the temple. They were weighed against gold and offered it to Sri Rangam. The gold was utilised to make temple vessels and roofing. Among those Kings, their aides and generals who did service to the Lord a few names can be mentioned. They are Harihara Rayar, Maha Rayar, Koppanna Udayar, Viruppanna Udayar, Muthaiya Thennayagar, Thammana Udayar, Prathani Somappa, Kadava Annar and Koppannar.

Another family the Temple notes speaks about is that of Uthama Nambi members of which had served Sri Rangam for about ninety generations; of them 73 generations had been managing the affairs of the Sri Rangam Temple. Garuda Vahana Pandithar belonged to the 74th generation. He was also called 'Srinivasa Uthama Nambi', Srinivasa Mahakavi' and Kavi Vaithya Puranthara. He was a contemporary of Ramanujar. He wrote 'Diviya Soori Charitham' in Sanskrit and 18 parts in Tamil about Ten Alwars, Andaal and Mathura Kavi. The seventy fifth was Uthama Nambi Rengachariya.

After him Krishna Raya of 79th generation of the family of Uthama Nambi was a noteworthy man. He established contact with Gopanna Rayar of Chenji, in 1371 A.D. Later Chenji was liberated from the moghuls. He received 17,000 gold moharas from Bukkar I and his son, Harihara, and with this sum he bought 106 villages for the Sri Rangam temple. Sri Rangacharya, son of Krishna Raya, bought 101

villages for the welfare of the temples, Sankara Raya Uthama Nambi, brother of Sri Rangacharya had great poetic talents. He consulted his ministers and then conferred the title "Poo Chakra Raja" and gave him a separate Adhinam in Sri Rangam.

Uthama Nambi repaired the Nammalwar Sannidhi which had been damaged during the invasion of the Moghuls. He renovated the Garuda in the Azakiya Manavalan Mandapha and also made good the dents and damages in the walls of the Sri Rangam Temple. He also did great service to the temple by renovating the Arya Padal Vasal which was damaged by a fire accident and the Ramar temple built by the Cholas and by installing Hanuman near Thuvajas thamba.

Krishnamacharya son of Sri Rangacharya was also known as 'Perumal Samatha' and 'Aranger Samatha' and gave his entire wealth for the temple works. Another important person in the family of Uthama Nambi was Thirumalai Natha Uthama Nambi. He is the author of "Lakshmi Kaviya". During his time the Sri Rangam temple had a property of 282 villages.

His "Lakshmi Kaviya" had 18 Sarkas and 100 slogas in Sanskrit. This Kaviya speaks about many events in the life of woriyur Nachiar from her birth to her marriage. The first three Sarkas of this book tells us about the Sri Rangam Temple, the deities housed in it, Alwars and other Acharyas, and the festivals of the temple.

In 1487, Chinna Krishnaraya Uthama Nambi got 20 villages from Thimmappa Naick and other leaders and continued the temple services. In 1534 an acute drought hit Madurai. The Naicka King of Madurai requested Chinna Krishna Raya Uthama Nambi to give the paddy stocked in the Sri Rangam Temple but he refused to budge until his death. This earned him the name "Kudal Sara Vala Nayanar".

Srinivasacharya belonged to the 86th generation of the family of Uthama Nambi. During his time Madurai, Trichy



and Thanjavur were divided into smaller ones and as a result only 96 villages were given to Chockanatha Naicker for the Sri Rangam Temple. This Naicka King was a great devotee of Sri Rangam Temple and so he gave these 96 villages to Srinivasacharya and also gave a Charter (Sasana) in Telugu for this purpose.

After this the Marattans captured Trichirapalli and Muravi Rao became the ruler. He took away 16 villages more from the temple lands and distributed the remainder equally among the temples of Sri Rangam, Thiruvanaikoil and Thayumanaswamy Temple but appointed Srirangacharya incharge of the above temples. A few years later Anwardeen, the Nawab of Karnataka captured Trichirapalli and after him Sirajudeen took over the administration of Trichirapalli. During his time the Nawab converted the temple lands into Srotiyam in a favour of the Uthama Nambi family for the purposes of maintaining the worship in the three temples.

After this some of the descendants of Uthama Nambi died heirless and hence the lineage was broken. A big blaze saw the mutilation of Uthama Nambi families and the loss of many ancient documents, the remaining members of his family are doing service to Sri Rangam even to day.

The temple notes tell us also about the services to Sri-Rangam rendered by Kanthadai Ramanujar in 1491 A.D. He was the elder brother of Veera Narasingha Rayar and was also called Rama Raja. He built the tower on the compound walls built by Veera Sundara Brahma Rayar. He renovated the hall of thousand pillars (columns), built the tower on the Agalangan walls in the east, gave the temple roof (Vimana) and cars gold coating and repaired the decayed parts during the Mohul invasion. For these services he was called Kulasekara Perumal.

The next note in the Temple Notes reads "code introduced by Udayavar (Ramanujam) had collapsed"<sup>6</sup> The members of Kanthadai had been looking after the temple affairs for about 190 years from the time of Muthali Andan. After them Sri Ranga Narayana Jeeyar and Vathula Desikar took over. After this, owing

to the difference of opinion among the temple workers, the pancharatra code preformed during the time of Ramanuja was ruined.

In 1498 A.D. Madurai and Trichirapalli came under the rule of Viswanatha Naicker. During that period Narasimmacharyiar, son of Vathula Desikar gifted many ornaments and vessels made of gold and silver. 30 years later King Krishnappa Naicker did a few more services to the Sri Rangam temple.

In 1579 there arose an altercation between Uthama Nambi and Thirumalchariya Pattar over the administration of the temple during the rule of Muthu Veerappa Naick. When Naicker supported Nambi and denied Pattar his rights, Pattar moved to Woriyur with his family. Later he received 20,000 gold moharas from a Reddiar. After Muthuveerappa Naicker his son Thirumalai chowri supported Pattar and thus Uthama Nambi was rendered helpless. Moreover he ordered Uthama Nambi to pay 50,000 moharas to pattar or else he would hand over Nambi to his enemies. Nambi remained unshaken but his son, Periya Thiruvadi committed suicide. When Pattar's men surrounded his house Nambi yielded to the King's degree.

Later, even though Nambi and Pattar passed away, their personal rivalry for power prevented to Sri Rangam Temple from regaining its past glory.

In 1588 during the reign of chokkanatha Naicker Srinivasa Desikar, a descendant of Andan won a debate that lasted 44 days with one Vajrangi of Advaitism. He received 'Thirtha Honours, chokkanatha Naicken and his brothers built many mandaphas and steps on the way to Nachiar Temple.

In 1678 Muthu Alagathri Naicker, brother of Chokkanatha Naicker presented a soorya prabai and an Umbrella of gold a ruby shirt and many jewels and vessels.

Rani Mangammal during her reign presented a pearl necklace, a diamond medal and a diamond crown to the temple. She weighed herself (Thula Bhara) and gave the treasure to the temple.

In 1707 during the time of Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Naicker Srinivasa Desikan, son of Srinanga Charya with the help of the king presented some Jewels to the Sri Rangam Temple and built a glass chamber. In 1720 Vedavyasa Pattar Ragunatha Varayar gave one trouble to the King and so Irullappa Naicker arrested him and crushed the mutinees. King Vijayarangan passed orders to pluck the eyes of the mutinees but with the help of Kumara Sreeniva Charya Ragunatha Varayar escaped this punishment. However he had to spend 12 years in prison.

In 1728 the Karnataka regime came to an end and consequently the Sri Rangam Temple suffered a lot. It fell on evil days, resulting in both the moghul invasion and the French. Kande Sahib captured the Thiruchirapalli Fort and began to receive tributes from the people of Sri Rangam. An associate of Rayar got one lakh ruppes from Parasar Pattar, Vathula Desikar and Uthamba Nambi by selling the temple Jewels, and paid it to the Sahib. Later when Nizam invaded, the Vaishnavites made friends with his officers and saved the Sri Rangam Temple. After him the French settlers who had their stronghold at Pondicherry came and camped at Sri Rangam for two years. However, they didn't do any damage to the temple but went away wielding a huge looty of wealth.

In 1781 A. D. Pilavanga Year Hyder Ali besieged Sri Rangam with one lakh troops. But with a help of Vaishnavite Chief Karnam his entry into the temple was thwarted. Likewise in 1790 his son, Tippu sultan, entered Sri Rangam but people like Jear, Pattar and Vathula Desikar made him go back by their peace making efforts and costly gifts. In the meanwhile an Annangar indulged in secret activities against the temple. This was found out by the Nawab and he was sent out of Sri Rangam.

In 1800 when the Moghul rule ended the East India Company became the rulers of the country. Trichy fell in the hands of Joseph Wallace. He prepared a list of items of expenditure in accordance with the revenue of the Sri Rangam Temple with the help of Gajendra Rayar his serbe and

Dubash Seshachala Iyer. The temple notes was regulated during this reign. During this period Vada Kalyars and Then Kalyars started fighting with one another to establish their rights in the Sri Rangam Temple. Wallace summoned the two parties, listened to their arguments and finally handed over the temple administration to Then Kalyers. The man who stood Wallace in good stead in this affair was Vellappa Mudali, an employee in the Devasthanam office. He helped him with the temple notes and helped him make a proper copy of the temple Notes .

### **Moolavar, Urchavar and other deities :**

Moolavar in the Sri Rangam Temple is one that is stationary in one place without changing places. Moolavar's image will be either Sila Vikragha or Sutha Vikragha. Sila Vikraghas are called Thirumanjana Thirumeni. Sutha Vikraghas appear with 'Thailakappu'. Sri Ranganathan in the sanctum sanctorum appears as Sutha Thirumeni Urchava Moorthis are made of metal. They are taken out in procession during the festival season. At the end of the festivals they will be joined with the Moolavar. In Sri Rangam Moolavar is set in the lying posture on the bed of snake. The five headed snake is Adishesan with its five hoods raised and serving as the bed. The scene of Peria Perumal lying on the snake bed in the Parkadal is the vision of Vaikundam and hence Sri Rangam is called earthly Vaikundam.

The Urchavar in the sanctum sanctorum appears in standing position. On either side of him appear the two consorts, Sri Devi and Boo Devi in sitting position. On the top of this sanctum sanctorum is seen the Sri Ranga Vimanam of gold. The figure of Paravasu Thevar is set facing the south in this Vimana. To signify the four Vedas, Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharvana there are four Kalasams set in the west. The four Kalasams can be viewed from the prathatshana part of senai Mudali and Paravasu Thevar from kili Mandapham (Parrot Mandapha). The "Manathoon" (columns) inside the sanctum sanctorum are sacred ones.

The big sannadhi in the big temple is that of Peria Perumal. Another big Sannadhi like that is that of Thayar. The Moolavars of this Thayar Sannidhi are Sri Devi and Boo Devi and the Urchavar is Rankanayaki Thayar. There is a vilva tree inside the Thayar Sannidhi. Thayar appears in the Kolu hall during the Navarathri Kolu. During the summer she presents herself in the Vasantha Mandapa. The other mandapas that are found in this part are the Kalyana Mandapha and oonjal Mandapha. Urchavar Sri Ranga Nachiar appears in the sitting position.

The Thulluka Nachiar is situated on the right of Kili Mandapha. Pahal Pathu of the Vaikunta Ekathasi Festival Perumal presents himself before Nachiar before returning to its appointed place.

Entering through the four face tower gate we find the Koorathalwar Sannidhi. The Moolavar is seen with his 'Saving hand' (Protecting hand). The Urchavar is found in the worshipping posture with folded hands. In front of the Koorathalwar sannidhi there is a small sannadhi for Lakshmi Narasimha. Here both the Moolavar and the Urchavar are Lakshmi Narasimha. Opposite to this on the left is situated the Nathamuni Alwar Sannadhi.

Next to this is found the UI (Inner) Andal Sannadhi This is so called because there is a Veli (outer) Andal Sannadhi near the bank of Kaveri. The inner Andal Sannadhi is facing the east. This is so since the Thayar Sannadhi should face the east. The Moolavar of this Sannadhi are Sri Ram, Sita and Lakshmana. The absence of Hanuman here is significant. Andal, Perialwar and Ramanujar are the three Urchavars. The reason for this is that Ramanujar was deemed the Andal Temple Annan. ( Elder brother ) The special feature of this is that Andal is found in the sitting posture in bridal outfit. The Andal statue is never taken out in a procession.

In the Krishna Sannadhi of the Vahana mandapa Venu-gopalan is both the Moolavar and Urchavar and the mother is Rukmani. Krishna in the dancing posture on the snake is quite captivating. Likewise in the Amirtha Kalsa Garudan Sannidhi, Garudalwar is seen holding the Amirtham in one hand. The Garuda figure in sila shape has been carved out in a

deft manner. The statue with four arms is the Thirumanjana Thirumeni Lakshmi Narasimha is the Urchavar here.

The Sannidhis of Thiruppanalwar and the Veera Hanumar are situated on the right of the Ranga Vilasa Mandapha. Veera Anjaneya, the Moolavar here, is supposed to have the head of Hanuman, the body of Bhima and the feet of Sankara. His raised right arm does grace; the left arm holds the 'Gathayutha'. There is a bell at the tip of the tail of Veera Anjaneya. The tail and Thiruvasi are also seen. Thiruppanalwar is the Urchavar here. In the Vittal Krishnan Sannidhi, Vittal Krishna is Moolavar. This temple is in a dilapidated condition. In the front are found some culverts. There is a hole at the top of the temple and hence the rain water enters it. Thondaradi Podi Alwar Sannadhi is near this.

At the end of extreme left of the Chokkappanai Hanuman Sannidhi is found the Chakkarathalwar Sannadhi. Moolavar Chakkarathalwar appears with 16 arms and Urchavar Chakkarathalwar appears with 8 arms. Another special feature is the "Thirunethra". The Urchavar is holding Sangu, Chakkara and Angusam (spur). Since Chakkarathalwar is every powerful and ferocious it appeases him. There is the Parthasarathy Sannadhi opposite this. Right behind Chakkarathalwar, Yoga Narasimham appears with four Chakkaras in four hands. To have a view of this statue we will have to come through the back of this sannadi and look through the glass window. The image of Chakkarathalwar is never taken out of the sanctum sanctorum.

Moolavar Chakkarathalwar's Sila image faces the east and is called Sudarsana Alwar. The arch around the Moolavar bears 108 letters standing for talisman of 108 letters. Like the Nava-graha sannidhi in the Shiva Temple Chakkarathalwar, Sannidhi is very significant for the Vaishnavites. Saturday is the appointed day for worshipping this Alwar. Inside the Sannidhi only lamps with the ghee as oil are lighted and outside it gingelly oil lamps are lighted.

Ramanujar Sannadhi is called Udayavar Sannadhi. It has another name Bashyakarar Sannadhi. During the Thirunatchatra

Udayavar is taken through the streets in a procession. During the Athyaina festival he is taken round inside the temple. Adjacent the Udayavar sannadhi are Parthasarathy Sannadhi and Pillai Logachar Sannadhi.

Garuda Mandapha or Garudalwar Sannadhi is a very vast one. Moolavar looks very tall and majestic in a colourful sitting posture. The finger and foot nails are long crooked. The nose is attractive like that of the edge, sharp and crooked. The colour painting done several years ago has not faded at all. Near the Moolavar, the Urchavar statue is found below. Thirumanjanam is done to this during certain festivals. During the Mohini Alankaram in Vaikunta Ekathasi, Sri Ranganatha stays in this mandapha for the devotees to worship.

On the right of Garuda Mandapha there is one small beautiful pond called Surya Pushkarni and adjacent to that is the Thirukkachi Nambi Sannadhi. In the Vehicle Chamber (shed) near Soorya Pushkarni we find chariots; vehicles of gold and silver on which the Lord is drawn in a procession. The vehicles are Adisheshan or snake, Karpaka tree, three horses, two garudas, a silver yali, a silver elephant, a lion, Hanumantha, two hamsas and two palanquins.

In addition to these there are three cars. They are used in the months of Thai and Chithirai and are called Thai car and Chithirai car. The third car is the "Ko" (cow) car.

There are separate sannadhis for Pattabiraman, Muthal Alvars, Theertha Karai Vasudevar and Thanvanthri. Thanvanthri Sannidhi is on the way to Thayar Sannidhi. There is found the figure of a lack creeping on the hand of Thanvanthri statue. This signifies the use of lack in ancient medical treatment. Before the Thayar Sannadhi we find the five pits and the three entrances.

Desikar Sannidhi is opposite to Thayar Sannidhi and Mettu Azhakiya Singer Sannidhi opposite to Kampar Mandapha. Here is present the eight handed Ukkira Narasingha Perumal. Since this is situated at the top of the twenty steps it is called Mettu Azhakiya Singer Koil. There is a small beautiful

pond called Chandra Pushkarni and near this pond is Kothanda Ramar Sannidhi. The huge images of Sri Rama. Sita and Lakshmana stand hence in all their splendour. Sri Ram garlanded with Salgrama. Parama Pathan Sannidhi is found next to this.

Apart from these there are sannidhis for Thirumazhisai Alwar, Nommalwar, Thirumangai Alwar and Mathurakavi Alwar. The three sannidhis for Nammalwar, Thirumangai Alwar, Mathurakavi Alwar are constructed in one place. Nammalwar is the Moolavar and the Urchavara are Nammalwar, Thirumangai Alwar and Mathurakavi Alwar, Moolavar Nammalwar, appears with Nama stamp and Urchavar Nammalwar appears in the worships posture.

In addition to these, we can find in this temple mandaphas like the hall of thousand pillars, small temples flag poles, altars, chokkapanai Hanuman etc. Thirukkottaran (Store-house) madapalli and the like are found separately. The place where prasadams of Perumal and Thayar are sold is known as Sri Pandara.

### **Manner of Worship and Naivedhya :**

In other sannidhis too worship is performed in accordance with the ancient tradition. Before Ramanuja's period the temple performed its rites in the Vaikanasa fashion, Ramanuja's intervention changed the worshipping fashion into pancharatna method. The Srirangam koil olugu gives the above information regarding pooja vidhi. Nadamunigal introduced the practice of performing Ranganatha's Thiru Aaradhana, Thirumanjanam, Vedaparayana uthasavas etc., with the recital of Tamil Marai (Alwars, pasuras) Nadamunigal learnt these pasuras from Nammalwar. He brought in the practice of reciting appropriate Tamil hymns for the puja performances so that they are not lost in oblivion.

It is the duty of man to consider himself a slave to the great Lord, Sri Ranga. He should also perform such duties by which the Lord is pleased. Without doing service to others worshipping the Lord for one's own pleasure benefits



and coming round His temple many times will only help to displease Him. If you love Him whole-heartedly He will bestow His gifts upon you.

Peria Perumal Thirupalli Eluchi (Waking up from sleep) takes place in the early morning with Veena music. At 8.30 in the morning butter and milk are given in Neivedhya to the Lord. The morning Neivedhya also consists of Ven Pongal, Dosai, sukku, Vellam, Kariamudu, Lime pickle Thirumal Vadai etc.. During the afternion (midday pooja) at 12.30 p.m. 18 padis of rice, sathamudu (Pepper soup) Kariamudu (Plantain), dhal, Thirukkannamudu(Khir) Athrasam (a kind of sweet) are presented to the Lord as Naivedhya. In the eveniag pooja at 6.45 p.m. Kshirannam (milk-rice) milk pongal, vadai, appam, thenkuzhal, kariamudu, Dadhiyodanam (curd rice) etc are given. The night Naivedihyam consists of Vadisil (Plain-rice) at 9.00 p.m. with satti aravanai kariamudu; between 9.15 and 9.30 p.m. milk mixed with camphor, saffron, cardamon with Nattucarkkarai (Brown sugar) are presented as Neivedhya.

In the same manner in the Thayar sanndhi Naivedhyam is also offered. At 8.45 A.M. Bread and milk are offered. At 9.00 A.M. Dosai, Pongal at 1.00 p.m. vadisal, Adhirasam, Dhal and Thirukkanamudu were given. At 6.45 Vadai, Thenkuzhal sweet puttu; at 9.00 p.m. aravanai (sugar Pongal) are the usual Naivedhyas.

Other minor deities are offered only a two time pooja every day in the morning and in the evening. During the Uthsava periods, the Naivedhya is specially prepared. At all other times the offering consists of milk and Vadisil only. For Anjaneya vadai malai and butter covering are performed

### **Holy Doctrine of Srirangam Temple**

The temple is an externalised form of the human body. The human body is essential for attaining moksha; hence it is known as koil. The important temples are seven. They are Ayodhya, Madura, Maya, Kasi, Kanchi, Avanthika and Dwaraka. They denote seven parts of of our body. The Vaishnava sthalas

are symbols of the six model points of the body (shata-adhara). A sadhaka starts from Moolathara and visualises paramatman and attain moksha.

A Sri Rangam lies in the midst of the rivers Cauvery and Coleroon which denote the ida and Pingala Nadis. Hence Sri Ranga denotes sushumana Nadi which lies in between ida and pingala. Sri Rangam Temple is also called Boologa Vaikunda as it embodies the structure of Vaikunda the divine residence of Narayana.

It is also called "Bhoga Mandapha" as the Lord here is in the form of "Ranga Sayi" or "Anantha sayi" (one who is in the yoga Nidra) as the king spends his day time in any place while he goes out for hunting etc., lord Ranga also stays in various other temples all over the country. They are his day dwelling nest houses. But Sri Rangam, is his own palace. The Lord Ranga Rajan (King Ranga) returns here every night to have sayana on his snake bed.

The word "KO" has many meanings: Lord, King, Cow etc., "IL" means "House". Hence 'Koil' means the house in which the Lord lives or The palace in which the King (who is Ranga resides') Sri Rangam is superior to the other temples Hence its name 'Thalai Arangam' It enables us to Visualise the qualities of the 'Parama Patham' which is also 'Nithya Vibhuthi'. So Thondaradippodi Alwar praises it as 'Peria Koyil Mathil Thiruvarangam (Thiru Arangam surrounded by high walls which is the great temple).

### **Arts in Sri Rangam Temple**

Arts like music, Play, Dance, Architecture, sculpture, painting etc., are enshrined in the Sri Rangam temple. The works of Art found in this temple do not belong to one particular century or one particular Monarch. Cholas, Pandyas, Naicks, Hoysalas and even the Mohamedans have contributed towards the enrichment of Arts here.

In an epigraph in the Nonmugam Gopura Vasal (The entrance of Nonmugam Towers) five Keerthanas of Thyaga

Brahmam are found. They belong to Kamboji, Arabi, Devakan-tori, DesiyaThodi and Soranga Ragas. The hymns of Alwars themselves are set to proper music. Nathamunigal who collected all pasuras from Nammalwar has classified all these hymns into two groups: Iyal and Isai (Literature and Music) that we should worship the Lord by singing the Isai Padalgal (Music) with the appropriate Thalas. The convention is to sing all the Hymns of the Alwars except Thiruvaimozhi during the 'Pahal Pattu' (The ten days which preceed the Sukla Paksha Ekadasi in the month of Markazhi) and to sing Thiruvaimozhi during "Irapatthu" (The ten days which begin with Ekadasi of the month of Markazhi) and to sing Iayrpa on the following day of Irapatthu. These show that the worship of the Lord of Sri Ranga is inter-twined with Isai and Iyal.

Similarly some operas which have been formed from Hranyavatha, Ravana Vatha, Krishnavathara and Vamana Avathara have been practised for long for the benefit of illiterate masses. Hence not only Literature and music but also Drama has been patronised in this temple. The Koyil Olugu narrates the following incident: During Muslim invasion a Dancer girl with her power of art charmed the Mohamedan Chief and led him to the tower of Paravasudeva and slew him by pushing him from the top of the tower<sup>7</sup>.

The Architecture of the temple belong to various periods but all the buildings have been built with granites only. There are a few stupas which are supported by simhas in the Chakrathalwar Sannadhi. Four pillared mandaphams are many in this temple and one, thousand pillared mandaphams. All the mandaphas are supported by bulky, high and beautiful stupas, particularly in the Ranga Vilas mandapham and Seharaya mandapham. The lower of columns of Raya Gopuram are amazing. The four pillared mandapham in which Kambaramayanam was exhibited for the first time lies in front of Thayar Sannadhi and in opposite to Ugra Narasimha. Many epigraphs have been engraved all over the temple particularly the way to Thayar Sannadhi is full of epigraphs on six or seven layers of granties from the bottom on the walls. The Raja Mahendra Praharam also contains many

inscriptions. The Koil mandaphas have been called which sculptors of the Kings and their wives who built that mandapha. Those sculptures exhibit the dresses and hairdos and ornaments of that period.

The sculptures of Ranga Vilas mandapha are rare and beautiful. Similarly the sculptures of Venugopal Sannadhi are full of life. For example the idols of the blushing girl in the southeast corner and the girl on the swing with a parrot in her hand and a girl seeing herself in the mirror and marking Tilak on her forehead etc., may be mentioned. These belong to Hoysala period (13th to 15th centuries). In the same Sannadhi beautiful miniature sculptures are also found. Examples are the sculpture of an elephant, the sculpture of child Krishna with butter in his hand are only of the size of a thumb. In the Garuda mandapha there are carvings on the wall. For example the bottom has been carved in the shape of a vase, the upper part of which is separated in the form of small shelves. Within them many sculptures have been carved in small size.

There are beautiful paintings too in this temple. The paintings depicting the scenes of Thiruppavai Hymns in the UIAndal Sannadhi are lively. That is the same thing in the case of Udayavar Sannadhi. On the inner walls of Garudalwar Sannadhi (which cannot be seen from out side) Dasavathara Scenes have been painted. Garuda has also been painted. The colour has not faded at all. In the Mandaphas around Thayar Sannadhi many paintings are found on the upper surface but their colouring has faded as it is in the Udayavar Sannadhi, with the passage of time. In the Sannadhi of Nammalwar Thirumangai Alwar and Mathurakavi Alwar paintings of Alvars, Jeeyar, SriUdayavar and Manakkal Nambi are seen.

### **Ornaments of Srirangam Temple**

The ornaments of Lord Ranga are rare and antique. The temple has been built by the monarchs of many dynasties. Similarly the grants to the temple and ornaments to the Lord have been gifted by many Kings Cheras, Cholas. Pandyas, Hoysalas and Naicks. The Sthalapuranam mentions the incident of Edward

the Seventh, on his arrival here presenting a Golden plate to the Lord in 1875.<sup>8</sup>

Jatavarma Sundara Pandya (1258-1268 A.D.) covered the temple with gold during his reign with an expense of 18 lakhs of rupees. Two crowns of the Lord are worthy of mention here-one is called the Pandya Head dress and the other is the Crown worn at the time of Markhazi festival, while decorating the Lord as Mohini. Most of the ornaments which are in use now had been presented by the Naick Kings. Krishnappa Naick (1573-1595 A.D.) and his son Kumara Krishnappa Naick have donated a Crown and a coat embellished with diamonds worth one lakh and fifty thousand rupees. Rani Mangammal (1689-1704 A.D.) also donated a garment to be worn by the Lord which is made of hard golden plates decked with diamonds, emeralds, sapphires and other precious stones. Its worth was 10 lakhs of rupees.<sup>9</sup> Vijayaranga Chockanatha donated a muthangi (Crown decked with pearls) it is made so as to cover nine parts of the body. It is said to have cost 11 lakhs of rupees. Bangaru Thirumalai has presented a golden sceptre.

### **Festivals of Srirangam :**

Festivals are celebrated each and everyday all over the year : They are periodical some on the particular Nakshatras or days : some are celebrated on certain Pakshas, some on certain months; some are annual.

Kodai Thirunal or Poochathu Thirunal is celebrated for 10 days in the month Chithirai. On the 6th day of Lord decorated completely with flowers emerges from the temple and resides at the Thurai Mandapha, hearing Perumal Thirumozhi recited to the accompaniment of Veena. On Chithra Poornima He after having a Holy dip in the Kaveri performs Gajendra Moksha in the evening and returns to his "Arangam" without any instrumental music except the "Pallisai" of Araiyaars.

Sri Rama Navami and Sri Jeyanthir are also celebrated Revathi is the birth Star (Thiru Nakshatra) of the Lord. Hence every Revathi day is celebrated. Chithira Brahmotsava is celebrated for 10 days. The Lord comes in procession for 9 days and

takes bath in the Revathi mandapha. The festival ends on 10th day after the daily procession is over and everybody goes to the Udayavar Sannadhi to worship him.

Vasanthotsava takes place for 9 days in Vaikasi month. Jyestabhishekam falls in Ani month. On Adi 18th day or 28th day the Lord Visits Kaveri to have the Holy dip. In Avani Pavithrotsavam is celebrated for 9 days after Uiryadi. For Purattasi, Navarathri is celebrated for 9 days. On the eve of Vijayadasami the Lord mounted on a horse goes to the Kattalagiya Singar groove and shoots arrows in every directions.

In Ayppasi, Thirumanjanam ( Sacred anointment ) is performed with Kaveri water in a golden pot. Unjal Thiruvizha ( 'Swing' festival ) is celebrated for 7 days to Nachiyar and 9 days to the Lord. Deepavali, Kaishika Ekadasi of Karthigai and Kerthigai festival are other important ones.

In Markazhi Thiru Adhyayana Uthsava ( Thiruvaimozhi festival ) is important Vaikunda Ekadasi festival is the most famous festival. It was originally started by Thirumangai Mannan ( Alwar ). Thiru Adhyayana Uthsavam falls into two halves; one half called "Pakarpattu" before the Ekadasi and the other half called "Irapattu" after the Ekadasi. In the month of Thai, Kanu and Magara Sangarandhi are important celebrations. The Boopathi Thirunal is also celebrated as the Chithrai Brahmothsavam.

In Masi month 'Theppam' ( boat - festival ) is celebrated for 9 days.

All the minor shrines also have their own festivals celebrated periodically. We cannot find the temple without any celebration at all or whatever the day we may choose to visit it.

### **The Temple Library of Srirangam**

A library is maintained by the temple. As on 20-6-1984 there are 684 'Palm leaf' books. Of these 684 books - 462

belong to Grantha Script; 14 belong to Telugu ; 5 to Devanagari script; 137 to Tamil; Remaining 66 are Panchangas ( Calenders ) Apart from these 737 books are in Tamil and 391 are English books. The palm leaf collections which contain panchangas, Ramayana, Acharya Shambu, Sri Ranga Mahathmiyam, Mahanatakam, Bhagavatam, Vedanta Saram, Shakuntala, Vikramorvasiya, Sri Bhashya, Prakasha Sahitya Deepa etc.

### **Museum in the Temple**

In the temple museum copper grants of Devaraya II Rajaraja Mahadeva, Mallikarjuna, Veera Pratapa deva, Mummadi Nayak etc., have been preserved. The following coins are also exhibited in the museum. The coins of Rajaraja, coins of Madurai Sultan, Portugese quarter, Gwalior coin, Dutch coin, Eigh cash, East India Company's ten Cash ( 1808 ) Japan's Yen, Chakkara coin, we can also see the weapons like sword, Spear etc., used by Kings.

Ivory carvings of Nayaks exquisitely beautiful and with precision are also found. Some of the carvings depict Bikshadana, a forest, Yali, Kali, Siva and Umadevi Panchaloga idols and copper-bronze idols are also there which belong to variuos fields.

Some palm leaves are also found here. They contain verses of Telugu Ramayana, Telugu Bhagavata, Sri Bhagavata, Tula-Kaveri Purana, Sundara Kanda and Periazhwar's Thirumozhi interpretation.

The currency notes found in the Hundi, currencies are belonging to ceylon, China, Austrialia, Philippines, Malaysia Japan, France, Korea, Bhutan, Arabia, Kenya, Singapore etc , are found. Nine old locks of gigantic size are found here. A rare specimen of lock with three keys, screw type lock are noteworthy among these.

Thus Sri Rangam temple attracts us as a sacred place (Sthala) with a big ancient temple on a good location, by its historic past and antiquity by its art and architecture construction, by its preservation of ancient Tamil civilization and

culture. It's Moolavar Uthsavar have been worshipped with all sanctity for centuries. It is a veritable source of research in the fields of art, architecture epigraphy, archaeology numismatics etc and in general every aspect of culture.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. நரசிம்மயங்கார் எஸ், ஸ்தானீகம் ரீரங்கம் கோயில் தத்துவம்'' பக். 15 ஸ்ரீலக்ஷ்மி பிரிண்டிங் ஒர்க்ஸ், சேலம்.
2. ,, பக். 30.
3. Koil OLUGU by V. N. Hari Rao Forward by M. Ramarao.
4. "Although the Kali Era years furnished by him appear to be wrong the saka years mentioned are more or less correct and supply with a number of useful clues",  
— Parthasarathy T. S. Koil Olugu p3. Thirumalai Tirupati Devasthanam Tirupati.
5. - Do - p24.
6. - Do - p76.
7. கோயிலொழுகு பக். 72-73 பதிப்பாசிரியர் ஸ்ரீகிருஷ்ணஸ்வாமி அய்யங்கார் ஸ்ரீனிவாசம் பிரஸ் திருச்சி-17
8. ஸ்ரீரங்கநாதஸ்வாமி ஸ்தல புராணம், தேவஸ்தான வெளியீடு, பக். 44, 1959
9. ,, பக். 43.

## Names of the Manaraphas & Sannadhis and other Buildings as seem in the Plan

1. Entrance of the South Gate or Nanmugam Kottai Vasal
2. Koorathalwar Sannadhi.
3. Four Pillared Mandapham.
4. Nadamuni Alwar Sannadhi.
5. Thondaradipodi Alwar Sannadhi.
6. Vittala Krishnan Sannadhi.
7. Thiruppanalwar Sannadhi.



8. Present Trustees office (old office room).
9. Ul Andal Sannadhi.
10. Vahana Mandapha Krishnan Sannadhi.
11. Amrutha Garudan Sannadhi.
12. Ranga Vilas Mandapam.
13. Kalkampam.
14. Chokkapanai Hanumar Sannadhi.
15. Devasthanam office.
16. Library & Musuem
17. Udayavar Sannadhi.
18. Parthasarathy Sannadhi.
19. Chakkarathalwar Sannadhi.
20. & 21. Vasantha Mandapam.
22. Karthikai Gopura Vasal.
23. Garuda Mandapam.
24. Thirukachi Nambi Sannadhi.
25. Garudan Sannadhi.
26. Nammalwar Sannadhi.
27. Sri Pandarm Hall.
28. Thirumazhisai Alwar Hall.
29. Aryabhatal Vasal.
30. Dwajasthamba Hanuman Sannadhi.
31. Storage for ghee.
32. Perumal's cradle mandapham.
33. Sukravarai Arai.
34. Thiruvanthikappu mandapam.
35. Nalikettan Vasal.
36. Karuvoolam.
37. Sandana Arai.

38. Vijaya Ranga Chokkanatha Naicker Mandapham.
39. Thondaman Medu
40. Senai Mudali Sannadhi.
41. Arjuna Mandapam.
42. Kili Mandapham.
43. Sri Ranganathar Sannadhi.
44. Sannadhi Krishnan.
45. Durai Mandapham.
46. Old Kitchen.
47. Paniyarapoddu.
48. Peria Sannadhi Kitchen,
49. Store room for mud pots.
50. Main stores for Thirukkotaram.
51. Thayar Sannadhi Pradakshinam.
52. Pattabi samar Sannadhi.
53. Mudal Alwar Sannadhi.
54. Paramapada Vasal.
55. Chandra Pushkarani.
56. Thayar Sannadhi.
57. Vadakku Vasal.
58. Kothandaramar Sannadhi.
59. Paramapatha Nathar Sannadhi.
60. Manal Veli.
61. Thavittarai Vasal.
62. Thousand pillared mandapham,
63. Sandy path
64. Vellai Gopura Vasal or East Gate
65. Sesharayar Mandapham.
66. Bhojaramae Sannadhi.
67. Pillai Lokachar Sannadhi.

# Tiruvadigai Temple

N. S. Ramaswami

The Virattanesvara temple in Tiruvadigai (A part of Panruti town in South Arcot District) has not attracted the scholarly attention that is its due. One of the eight "Virattanams" in the Tamil land, intimately connected with a memorable incident in the history of Tamil Hinduism, and with an art history that has some intriguing aspects, this great temple deserves to be studied with care.

Its site, Adigai, has a long history. It seems to be associated with Adigaiman Neduman Anji, a hero of the Sangam age and a patron of Avvai. Some scholars believe that its original name, Adiyarayan Mangalam, or Adiraja Mangalam, led in course of time to the variant, "Adigai", and that the Adigaiman lived here.<sup>1</sup>

The locality has gone under many name, as found in Tamil literature. Appar, who is most intimately associated with it, calls it "Adiyaraiyamangai". Another old author has "Adigai Mangai". Some of the other names are "Adigai Managar" and "Adigai Mudur". Inscriptions have "Adiyaraiya Mangalam", Adirajaman-galam" and "Adirajamangaliyapuram".<sup>2</sup>

This wealth of names appears to indicate that the locality was of considerable importance in early times. It was a battlefield in the seventh century. The celebrated Kodumbalur inscription of Bhuti Vikramakesari says that an ancestor of his, Samarabhiraman, defeated the Chalukya in Adiyaraiyamangalam. He must have fought the invader as an ally of the Pallavas.

It is in Pallava times that the history of the temple begins, and it was also in that epoch that the most celebrated incident in its history occurred. The earliest of its near one hundred inscriptions is dated in the reign of a Pallava king named Paramesvara. It is not clear whether this was the earlier king of that name, who (according to T. V. Mahalingam) ruled from 669 to 690-691, or to the later one (circa 728-729 to 731-732).<sup>3</sup> Since the latter's reign was very brief and much troubled, he is unlikely to have

undertaken the considerable venture that the re-building of this temple in stone was in all probability. It was the earlier king to whom this pious task should be attributed.

Sekkizhar's graphic account of the vicissitudes in Appar's spiritual development shows that there was a temple in Tirvadiga before Paramesvara I came to the throne. The early celebrity of the temple was due to the fact that it was the memorable scene of Appar's return to the faith of his fathers.<sup>4</sup> It is generally believed that Appar's contemporary Pallava, who first persecuted him and then followed his example in accepting Hinduism, was Mahendra I. (circa 610-630), the great-grandfather of Paramesvara I.

The Tiruvadigai temple which Appar and Mahendra knew must have been of brick and mortar, both perishable materials. It is an axiom of Tamil art history that there were no structural temples before the date of Mahendra's Mandagappattu inscription. Therefore, it seems to follow that the beginnings of the present structural temple in Adigai were in the period between the reigns of Mahendra I and Paramesvara I, that is, in the six decades between about 630 and about 690.

For some reason, it was found necessary to renovate the structural temple quite often. In the sixteenth year of the reign of Nripatunga, one of the last Pallavas, a chief repaired it. The date would be about the end of the ninth century.<sup>5</sup> Later renovations followed, as notably by Ravivarman Kulasekhara, the Chera king early in the fourteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

There are two remote clues to the date of building or of the reconstruction in stone of the temple. The first is very indeterminate. It relates to the concept of Virattanam.

The destruction of the three cities of the "asuras", with lord Siva becoming "Tripurantaka", pertains to this tradition. The seven temple where its other aspects are enshrined in Tamilnad are Tirukkandiyur, Tirukkovalur, Tiruppariyalur, Tiruvirkudi, Tiruvazhuvur, Tirukkurukkai, and Tirukkadavur. In Tirukkandiyur the Lord cut off Brahmas fifth head, in Tirukkovalur: He overthrew Andhakasura, in Tiruppariyalur. He cut off Daksha Prajapathi's head, in

Tiruvirkudi He overthrew Jalandharasura, in Tiruvazhuvur He destroyed Gajasura, in Tirukkurukkai. He burnt up Kama, and in Tirukkadavur He subjugated Yama.

The earliest inscription in the Virattanesvara temple in Tirukkovalur is of the reign of Nandivarman III. The temple has two inscriptions of Nirpatunga's also, in his eighteenth and twentieth years<sup>8</sup>. The Amritaghatesvara in Tirukkadaiyur "must have been reconstructed before the thirteenth year of Rajaraja I, A.D. 998"<sup>9</sup>. The earliest epigraph in Tirukkandiyur is of the twenty-first year of Nrpatunga.

These facts prove what, in fact, is quite clear, that the Virattanesvara concept was quite popular in Pallava days. The most striking incident in this tradition is the destruction of the three cities of the "asuras", and from the fact that it is this aspect which is enshrined in the Tiruvadigai temple. it may be deduced that this fane was regarded as an important one.

The story of Lord Siva as "Tripurantaka" occurs in detail in the Karnaparvan of the "Mahabharata". This is based on older accounts, found in the Samhitas and the Brahmanas. There are variant versions of the legend in the "Satapatha Brahmana" and in the "Aitareya Brahmana". Almost all the "agamas" detail the forms of iconography for this concept<sup>10</sup>.

This tradition occurs in Tamil literature from early times. The "Kalittokai" (I.2; lines 1-5 and II. 38; lines 1-4) refer to Lord Siva as "Tripurantaka" Who destroyed the three cities and Who punished Ravana when he presumed to lift up the Himalayas. The 'Tirumurugarruppadai" (lines 151-154) describe the concepts of Uma-Maheswara. Ardhanari' Vrishabhadhvaja and Tripurantaka. The "Manimekhalai" has a reference (1.54-55) and so has the "Silapadhikaram" in two contexts (6; 40-45 and 28: 66-75). Naturally, there are references in the "Thevaram" too<sup>11</sup>.

The Tiruvadigai temple, as originally built of brick and mortar could have been one of the early fanes in Tamilnad

to give expression to a popular and dramatic concept. While its contemporaries and perhaps its predecessors too have disappeared with time, it has survived in a rebuilt structure. In its original foundation it would be contemporary of the Siva temple in Kuram and the fane on the top of Tirukka-zhukundram hill, both ascribed to Paramesvara I and neither modified as much as it is.

This is the first small pointer to the period the temple must have been built in. The second is its stylistic off unity with the Kailasanatha temple, in Kanchipuram. Jouveau Dubreuil finds a resemblance between the vimanas of the two temples and concludes that, therefore, the Tiruvadigai fane should be attributed to Paramesvara II, though he admits that this reign was a "short" one<sup>12</sup>. The Kanchi temple also contains a relief of Tripurantakamurthi<sup>13</sup>.

All available evidence points to the strong possibility that Tiruvadigai temple existed before Mahendra I came to the throne as a structure of brick and mortar, and that it was rebuilt in stone by the time of Paramesvara I. It needed to be repaired and renovated not long after.

The Virattanesvara cannot be the Gunadara-viccuram which, according to Sekizhar, Mahendra I built of materials from a Jain monastery in Pataliputra (now a part of Cuddalore New Town). Since all temples before the Mandagappattu epigraph were of brick and mortar, Mahendra could have obtained no structural building materials from Pataliputra in which to erect a stone temple in Tiruvadigai. The temple now called the Gunadara-viccuram which stands in Tiruvadigai about two furlongs from the Virattanesvara, is undoubtedly Pallava, since it contains many indisputably Pallava images. It is this temple which Mahendra I could have erected, though the difficulty about the building materials remains. The Gunadara-viccuram is now much dilapidated, lacking a roof for the most part. Its walls are of brick<sup>14</sup>.

It was in the initial brick temple of Virattanesvara that the leading incidents in the life of Appar occurred. His sister,

Tilakavathi, was doing humble, but devoted, service there before he turned Jain. It was to this temple that Darmasena, the abbot of the Jain monastery in Pataliputra, hurried one night unable to bear his stomach pain, and it was there that Tilakavathi cured him as he sang the famous hymn, "Kurra-yinvaru vilakkakilir". He refers in some of his other hymns to the persecution he suffered at Mahendra's hands.

Appropriately, there are shrines to Appar and Thilakavathi in the temple. Naralokavira, one of the great generals of Kulottunga I and Vikrama Chola (the other being Karunakara Tondaiman, with whom he is sometimes confused<sup>15</sup>), constructed the former shrine in the twelfth century. (No. 369 of 1922)<sup>16</sup>.

The temple received gifts from donors in the Chola period, no doubt because it was one of the greatest in the land. Additional structures too were raised from time to time, as by Naralokavira, who also built a hundredpillared mandapa. The Cholas who figure in the temple's inscriptions range in date from Parantaka I to the last king, Rajendra III. As with the benefactions in many other temples, the gifts are of land and provision to maintain votive lamps.

Kopperunjinga, who helped to bring the Chola power down, was also a donor. Dynastic rivalry had no bearing on the maintenance of temples, which was a charge on all the community. The Pallavas had not only built and rebuilt the temple, they or their nobles gave it gifts, like Nandivarman III, who donated gold (36 of 1903). A record of the sixteenth year of Kopperunjinga states that he gave thirty-two cows and a bull for a votive lamp and in his third year thirty-nine cows and a bull.

There are Pandya inscriptions in the temple, testifying not only to Pandya control over Nadunadu at different times but also to the fact that dynastic hostility caused no harm to temples.

To Vijayanagar times belong epigraphs of Kampanna in the fourteenth century, of Saluva Narasimha in the fifteenth,

of Achyutha and Sadasiva in the sixteenth, and of Sriranga in the same sixteenth century after the Tallikota disaster. The Nayaks of Thanjavur too are represented.

Tiruvadigai figured in the Carnatic wars of the eighteenth century. On one occasion a fort here held in Mohammad Ali's interest surrendered to the French pusillanimously. It is difficult to say whether the temple itself had been used as a fort. A few other temples were; for example, the Sri Kapaili temple in Mylapore, Madras, in the seventeenth century, the Chidambaram, Srirangam, Jambukesvaram and the Sri Ekamranatha in Kanchipuram in the eighteenth century. It is probable that it was the temple which was used as a fort. For one thing, it is spacious enough and protected by lofty prakara walls. For another, the hundred-pillar mandapa which Naralokavira built in the twelfth century seems to have been destroyed in some violence quite as much as due to the passage of time. Perhaps the Tiruvadigai fighting, or rather skirmish, damaged it. It was rebuilt in the present century by a local benefactor.

### **Art in the temple**

The temple's art is quite distinguished. It contains aspects of Pallava and Chola genius. The vimana raises some intriguing scholarly questions. The temple, as a whole, contains some artefacts brought from other regions.

The temple, which faces east, extends over 7.5 acres. A big gopura, which is 110 feet high, is in seven storeys. Which king or noble erected it is not known, but he stands in effigy on the western side of the gopura to its right. It is virtually certain that he must have lived in Vijayanagar times, since there is the tell-tale motif of women sculptured at either entrance and connected with each other by reliefs of festoons going up one side, running along the ceiling and coming down the opposite side. The reliefs of one hundred and eight dance poses added to the northern and southern walls near the entrance also seem to be of Vijayanagar times, judging from the dress and ornaments. But there are two



inscriptions on this gopura of Rajaraja I referring to his exploits in Kandalur Salai. Therefore, it looks as if the gopura was erected in Chola times, but modified or decorated in Vijayanagar, or even Nayak, days. It is an impressive structure.

In front of this gopura is another striking structure, a tall mandapa borne on sixteen pillars. It has a modern look. The paintings which cover the ceiling in twelve compartments are indisputably modern. But the mandapa has glorious name, "Tirunirru". It is believed that it was here that Tilakavathi gave her brother vibhuti, or tiruneer, before he entered the temple on his return from Pataliputra.

From the main gopura the devotee proceeds to another gopura, about a hundred yards to the west. This is of five storeys. The base, which is of stone, contains the carp insignia of the Pandyas. One of Pandyas who figure in the temple's inscriptions could have erected it. The upper part, which is of "sudai" was renovated in 1940.

Between the two gopuras there stands a mandapa with sixteen pillars. There is a stone ring near the ceiling. The mandapa appears to be of modern construction. Nearby there is an image of Buddha. By the side there is a big tank, the "Chakra Thirtham".

Elsewhere in the temple is a mandapa with a hundred pillars (a conventional number). There is inscriptional evidence for the fact that Naralokavira built a structure of this kind in the Thiruvadigai temple. It is believed that this has disappeared, partly no doubt due to the passage of time, but partly perhaps due to incidents in the Carnatic wars two centuries ago. The existing mandapa is of later origin.

There are shrines for Lord Nataraja, Tilakavathi, Appar, Lord Tripurantaka, Ganesa and Arumugam in the prakara, around the main sanctum. Inscriptions in the temple indicate the builders of a few of these. It was Naralokavira who also erected that of Appar (Inscription 369 of 1922). Another benefactor, not so well known, built that of Ganesa. It was renovated in 1477 A. D. by Vennaya Perumal. (410 of 1922)

The Vimana is distinctive. Its adhisthana alone is of stone, while the walls above it are apparently of brick (apparently because a modern seeming application of cement covers the surface). "The stone Kapotabandha adhisthana was added in the 13th century (proved by an inscription) as a revetment or protective facing for the much eroded brick-work of the original adhisthana".<sup>17</sup> The walls do not provide "devakosthas" in which it was customary to place divine images even in Pallava times. Instead, the arrangement is that followed in the Kanchi Kailasanatha and the Panamalai Talagirisvara temples, both built by Narasimha II Rajasimha early in the eighth century. Side shrines, or "angalayas", have been added here to the texture of the main shrine. The surface images, though much obscured today by a liberal application of cement, are Pallava in style.

The Vimana is of great interest. The tallest vimana in Tamilnad temples, that in Rajarajesvaram in Thanjavur, built early in the eleventh century, "seems to have been modelled on the lines of Virattanesvara temple at Thiruvadigai which was a Pallava foundation of 7th century and renovated in 9th"<sup>18</sup> This view has been contested. Another scholar holds that the vimana is "a later Chola renovation of a temple, which may have a late Pallava foundation."<sup>19</sup>

Jouveau Dubreuil considered that the Vimana resembles that of the Kanchi Kailasanatha temple. There is now the second view that it foreshadowed the Thanjavur vimana. It seems certain that it cannot be a "later Chola renovation", for there are many distinctly Pallava features here. "The core of the temple, the present plan, elevation etc seem to be of the period of Nripatunga (9th century) The side-shrines (angalayas) attached to the main shrine are found in the Pallava temples of Kanchi and not in Chola temples. The stucco figures do not resemble the cult images placed inside the niches as in Chola temples, but resemble very much the wall figures of the Pallava structural temples. Inside the sanctum, the Somaskanda Panel is seen as in Pallava temples. In addition to the above, two Pallava inscriptions, one of Tellarrerinda Nandi and another of Nripatunga, are found on the door-jambs of the extant mukha-mandapa. The inscription of Nripatunga specifically men-

tions that the Virattanesvara temple was renovated in his reign. Thus we have every reason to believe that the core of the main prasada belongs to the period of the Pallavas."<sup>20</sup>

It is reasonable to conclude that the Thiruvadigai vimana preceded the Thanjavur masterpiece. It has something of the air of that majesty. As in Thanjavur, the shadow of the vimana is said not ever to fall on the ground.

The original object of worship in the main sanctum was a Umamahesvara relief on the back wall. But in Chola times a fluted Linga was installed in front of it. There are Pallava pillars in the ardhamandapa.

The Buddha image, which has been attributed to the tenth century, is not the only extraneous sculpture in this storied temple. It contains a superb Nolamba image of Mahishamardhani. It must have been brought from the Nolamba country (modern Anantapur district in Andhra Pradesh) by the Chola conquerors in the eleventh century.<sup>21</sup>

A remarkable relic of the Pallava day is the Chaturmukha Linga, found in the prakara. About three feet high, it has four faces, Aghora, Tatpurusha, Sadyojata, and Vamadeva, on the south, east, west and north respectively. "This is the earliest and perhaps only one Pallava chaturmukha linga from the Tamil country".<sup>22</sup> A Chaturmukha linga is held to represent the five forms of Siva. The fifth form, Isana, is shown at the top of the Linga.

There are two gardens in the temple. They are named after Appar and Tilakavathi. There is also a monastery named after the saint. It stands outside the temple. One of the festivals celebrated in the temple also bears Appar's name.

It is natural that the memory of the great saint should lie like a benediction over Tiruvadigai. Apart from the famous hymn, "Kurrayina varu vilakkilir", which is the very first of the Thevaram songs, he sang many others on the temple. His younger contemporary, Sambandar, has a hymn. So has

Sundarar, in the next century. It was in the Siddhavada monastery that Sundarar had experience of the Lord's beneficence in the story told of the lodging at night.

Some other songs on the temple are included in "Tiruvachagam" (the eighth 'Tirumurai'), "Tiruvisaippa" and "Tiruppallandu" (in the ninth), "Tirumandiram" (in the tenth) and "Tirutondar Tiruvandhadhi" and "Tiruvekhadasa Malai" (in the eleventh). After Sekkizhar in the twelfth century, there were Arunagirinathar in the fifteenth and Vadalur Ramalinga Swami in the nineteenth who sang of the temple.

Famed in tradition, history and art, the temple is one of the most striking in Tamilnad.

### **Vishnu temple**

There is another old temple in Tiruvadigai, apart from the Gunadaraviccuram. This is the Saranarayana Perumal. Its earliest inscription is that of Krishna III Rashtrakuta. Therefore, it has been in existence since the tenth century. It received gifts in Chola days<sup>23</sup>.

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4. "Periapuranam": "Tirunavukkarasu Puranam", verse 146.
5. "Epigraphia Indica", VII, p. 196.
6. Op. cit, IV, p. 146 and VIII, p. 89.
7. S. R. Balasubrahmanyam: "Early Chola Temples", Bombay, 1971, p. p. 85, 86.
8. Nandivarman III: "South Indian Inscriptions", VII, no. 907. Nrpatunga, 297 and 303 of 1902.

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10. T.A. Gopinatha Rao : "Hindu Iconography", Vol. II, Part I, Madras, 1916. p. 164 ff.
11. K. R. Srinivasan : "Some Aspects of Religion as revealed by Early Monuments and Literature of the South", Madras, 1960, pp. 183—185.
12. Joureau Dubreuil; "Les Pallavas", Pondicherry, 1916-1917 p. 54. After stating that he has, in the first volume of his "Pallava Antiquities", referred to the resemblances between the vimanas of the Tiruvadigai and the Kanchi Kailasanatha temples, he proceeds; "Il est donc probable qu'il faille attribuer le temple de Siva a' Tiruvadi au roi Paramesvaravarman II. Cependant ce temple semble avoir ete' reparé a' plusieurs epoques (nous savons par l'inscription 33 de 1903 qu'il le fut sous le regne de Nripatunga.) L'inscription de Tiruvadi est datee de troisieme annee de Paramesvarvarman, Il est probable que le regne de ceroi fut court". ("It is therefore that one attributes the Siva temple in Tiruvadigai to King Paramesvara II. However, this temple seems to have been repaired in several periods (we know from inscription 35 of 1903 that this was in the reign of Nripatunga.) Tiruvadigai inscription is dated in the third year of Paramaesvara. It is probable that the reign of this king was short".
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14. K. R. Srinivasan; op. cit. p. p. 194 f. T. V. Mahalingam; op. cit. p. 136n.
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# **The Temple of Vaitheesvaram**

**S. VAITHILINGAM**

## **Introduction :**

It is a fact that the delight of enchanting features of marvellous divine beauty which is a joy for ever has built the culture of Tamilnadu.

The temples of Tamilnadu are of great antiquity and many of them are held in high esteem and respect by all people. They attract thousands of pilgrims even today from all parts of India and abroad.

The temples in proper form are said to have come into existence in Tamilnadu, only long after the Vedic period. They were constructed strictly in accordance with Agamas, Silpa and Vastu sastras. As the temples have been constructed to represent the principles or sacred centres of a human being the pattern of the fundamentals of temple is the same throughout the country.

The aesthetic sense and imagination of man made images for the several God-heads and their forces, and constructed temples around them. Temple culture developed gradually, and the life of Tamils developed around it. The Nayanmars, Alwars and great savants came to revive god-awareness, devotion, meditation and mysticism in mankind from time to time.

The religious significance, the architectural grandeur and the sculprural splendour of the temples with the massive structures such as gopuram (tower) Vimanam (Dome of the Garpagraham) mandapam, teppakulam etc., plunge the spectators, especially devotees into wonder and admiration. They purify the mind, elevate the thought and sublimate the very life of the people. They let the devotees forget themselves, get rid of worldly worries. and derive much pleasure and spiritual solace by offering worship to the deities.

Temples are regarded as cradles or nursery beds of fine arts. The temple festivals provide the necessary inspiration for different artists and craftsman to display their skill in arts and crafts.

An humble attempt has been made in this paper to present some background knowlege about the aesthetic and cultural glory of Vaitheesvaran koil.

### **Location of the Temple :**

Vaitheesvaran koil, a small village six kilometres south of Sirkali, is a place of pilgrimage in Thanjavur district of Tamilnadu. Situated on the Madras-Tiruchi main Railway line between Chidambaram and Mayiladuthurai it is nearly 264 kilometres from Madras. It has been linked with important centres by both bus and train routes.

The renowned temple is famous for *Murthy*, *Sthalam* and *theertham* as per the religlous approach.

The temple with its massive walls lofty gopurams, shrines and mandapams covers an area abobt 10.70 acres. Hundreds of devotees come to this temple throughout the year for fulfilling *prarthana*s and vows.

### **Different names of this temple :**

According to the ancient tradition this sacred place is called by saivite saints as *Pullirukku Velur* in chaste Tamil [*Pul*-bird *Jatayu*, *Irukku*-Rig Veda, *Vel*-murugan, *Oor*-Suriyan (Sun)]. It is believed that *Jatayu*, *Rig Veda*, *Murugan* and *Surian* had offered their worship here to get salvation or boon from the presiding deity.

The place is known as *Jatayupuri* since *Jatayu*, the legendary Vulture-king worshipped and lived here. According to the puranic version *Sampathi* and *Jatayu* were said to have brought flowers daily from *Poompuhar* (i.e. Perumthottam a village) to perform poojas to Lord Siva here. It is said that *Jatayu* fought against Ravana of Sri Lanka for the cause of Sri Sita and died near this place. It is believed that



Sri Rama performed here the last rites of Jatayu. Hence the '*Jatayu-kundam*' is still preserved and remembered with great devotion and respect in this temple.

The place is mentioned as *Vedapuri* since the celebrated four vedas are believed to have performed poojas to the Lord Vaithianathaswamy.

The place is *Kandapuri* as it is said that Sri Kanda worshipped and received '*Chendu*' (boquet of flowers) from his mighty fathar.

The place is identified by some scholars as *Velkottam* mentioned in '*Kanattthiram Uraitha Kathai*' of Silappathikaram. To support this point it is that Lord Murugan got the weapon '*Vel*' (Divine spear) from this mother to kill the Demons (Jarakam. Surapanman etc.,) who caused troubles to Rishis (sages) and men.

The place is further identified as '*Sampathi Vanam*' mentioned in the Tamil epic '*Manimekalai*', There is Sampathi nandavanam inside the temple in support of this point.

It is said that *Angaraka* (Mars) was once suffering from red leprosy and he came, here to take bath in the '*Siddhamirtha theertham*' (Temple tank) and perform poojas to the Lord Vaithianathaswamy with Senkzhuneer (Red water lilly) flowers. He did it with devotion and got cured of his disease. So this place is called *Angarakapuram* and *Angaraka kshetram*.

This place is called *Dinakarapuri* or *Parithipuri* (Dinakaran, Parithi-sun). Sun is said to have worshipped the presiding deity.

This place is *Ambikapuram* since goddess *Thaiyalnayaki* is said to have performed poojas to the Lord Siva.

This is the place where *Danvanthri* (physician for Devas) did penance and established Sri Vaithianathar, the presiding deity. As the deity is a self manifest Lingam, Danvanthri might have

established yanthram near the deity of this sanctum. Because of the service rendered by Danvanthri to the Lord the place is known as *Danvanthri Kshetram*.

Apart from the above names Vaitheesvaran koil is fervently called by the devotees as *Vaithianathar Koil, Vinaitheerthan Koil, Thaiyalnayaki Koil, Balambal Koil etc.,*

### **The significance of architectural outlay of the temple**

Though some puranic-mythological-statements are highly imaginative and beyond logic they are in one way very much helpful and useful for the growth and glory of temple art.

The '*Sthala Vriksham*' (Temple tree) is *Vembu* (Margosa) with its thick foliage, and it is found rear the Eastern inner courtyard and the eastern Rajagopuram, In one of the three niches of the paved portion of the tree there is an old image of Lingam for worship. The deity with the shade of this sacred tree is called as '*Vempadimal*' and '*Athi Vaithianatha puri*'. It is interesting to note that this small place is the divine rootcause for the enlargement of various structures connected with the present appearance of the temple complex.

It is told that the Margosa tree with its thick foliage murmurs through its leaves the song of praise to the Lord as the celestial healer of all human diseases. It is believed that inhaling the sweet smell and eating the leaves of this tree one can get the gracious relief from many ailments.

As regards the antiquity of this sthala viruksham it is mentioned in thalapuranam that the tree of highly medicated value was *Kadamba* (Sea side Indian Oak) Common Kadamba) in *Kritha Yuga*, *Vilva* (Basit) Aegle Marmelos in *Thretha yuga*, *Vakula* or *Makizha* (Miumsops elengi) *Dwapara Yuga* and is *Nimba* (Morgosa) in this *Kali Yuga*. The different transformations of this stupendous tree is highly imaginative, but devotees attach much importance to this tree with firm religious faith. From this legend the antiquity of Athivaithianathar dates back to a hoary past when man was in the most primitive stage of his existence. It should be noted here that the age-old faith in divinity could

not be traced and the continued faith also is an important cause for the emergence and survival of temple arts.

Vaitheesvaran koil has been well laid out and it covers a large area for different artistic structures. There is a lovely imposing *Rajagopuram* in the west front and another on the Eastern side, of equal grandeur and importance. In the interior there are two *Kattai* (short) *Gopurams*, one in the west and another in the Eastern side.

There are four Guardian deities, viz., *Karpaga Vinayakar* in the south, *Bairavar* in the west, *Veerabadrar* in the east, and *Badrakali* in the north of this temple. In support of this, there is one stanza in Tamil as follows :

“தெற்கிற் கணேசன் திகழ்மேற்கிற் பைரவனும்  
தொக்க வடக்கில் தொடர்காளி - மிக்ககிழக்  
குள்ளிருக்கும் வீரனையும் உற்றுப்பணிந் துயந்தோம்  
புள்ளிருக்கு வேளூரிற் போய்”

There is a shrine for *karpaga vinayagar* in the Southern corridor. There are small shrines for *Aivali Vinayakar* and *Badrakali* in the northern corridor adjacent to the Swami shrine.

*Sarasvathi Pandaram* (Library) can be found in the Thirumali-gai Patthi of northern corridor. *Yagasalai* is situated in the eastern corridor.

The Sannidhi of Sri Vaithianathaswami is facing west, whereas the sannidhi of Goddess Thaiyalnayaki facing south. There is a special shrine dedicated to Sri Selva Muthu Kumaraswami near Swami shrine of this temple as He is supposed to have been worshipped by Lord Siva Himself.

In the North Corridor of Swami shrine there are sannidhi for *Lord Nataraja*, *Durga* and *Chandesvarar*.

As it is considered that the power of *Navagrahas* is impotent to give any harm to the people of this locality they are

standing in one row in the east Thirumaligai-p-patthi behind the Swami shrine. *Danvantri* can be found near the place.

As this place is Angarakapuram there is a separate shrine for him in the Eastern prakaram of this temple near the shrine of Thandayuthapani. There is also a fine bronze image of *Utsavar Angaraka* to which special pooja is performed daily. Special significance is attached to the *Angaraka Pooja*. Every Tuesday Angaraka is taken in procession with His goat-mount (*Attukkada vahanam*).

Images of *Sattanathar* (stucco) and stone are found on southern outer wall of Swami shrine. The row of *Nayanmars* are found in the south inner prakaram whereas some bronze statues of Nayanmars are placed in North prakaram. The *Jatayu Kundam* is in the south inner prakaram where the prasadam of sacred ashes is given to the devotees. The images of Sri Rama, Sri Lakshmana. Sage Viswamitra, Sage Vasishta and Jatayu are worshipped on the top of the Jatayukundam in memory of the Jatayu episode.

There is a beautiful tank with *Neerazhimantapam* (mandapa situated in the middle of the tank) goes by the name *Siddhamirtha theertham* and it is directly before the gracious sight of Sri Thaiyalnayaki (i.e., directly in front of the Amman Shrine). People who are possessed of evil spirits visit this temple and get cured by taking bath in the Siddhamirtha tank for a particular period.

There is a flower garden in the name of Sampathi, the legendary vulture king, as *Sampathi nandavanam* near the interior of eastern Raja Gopuram courtyard.

High compound walls are on all four sides of the temple and there is a *madavilakam* in the south.

#### *Historical importance of this temple and its arts :*

Most of the great temples of Tamil nadu carry inscriptions on their walls. Even though these inscriptions refer only to gifts of property and the temple administration, they throw a

great deal of light to ascertain the age of structures and materials available in the temple. Even though Tamil Nadu escaped the ravage of demolition of temples during campaigns and foreign invasions, periodic renovations (once in twelve years as per the agamic method) of the temples have intervened and masqueraded what was the original temple. This ancient temple has only limited epigraphical evidences. A number of stones containing valuable inscriptions of different periods are said to have been defaced, displaced and buried during renovations from time to time. Yet a few ancient inscriptions could be seen on the walls of this temple.

Eight inscriptions which have been properly deciphered include those of the following kings: *Veerapandiyan*, *Vikrama Chola* (1126-1136 A.D.) *Achuthappa Nayak* (1560-1600 A.D.), and *Tulajaji Maharaja* (1763-1767 A.D.). The inscription of Veerapandiyan is supposed to be very ancient. As the inscriptions assignable to Vikrama Chola are not in order the real services rendered by him to the greatness of this temple could not be known to the people.

On seeing the styles of architecture and sculpture of this temple one can try to find out the services or art-contributions made by *pallavas*, *Cholas*, *Nayaks* and *Nagaratthars*. It is very difficult to give a correct note of the particulars of the history of art-products without the support of proper evidences. However there are precious art products available in this temple; they reflect the synthesis of art-culture.

### **Architectural and Sculptural significance of this temple :**

As art is an inseparable hand-maid of religion and Hindu mythology, architecture, sculpture, painting, music and dance reached their peak of glory only in and through the temples. History of the temple architecture is nothing but the study of the artistic tastes and styles of the temple-builders of different times reflecting the faith, ideals, culture and civilisation of the people. In short the architecture can be regarded as the supreme matrix of culture and civilisation.

Hindu mythology has done a great service in the creation of different structures and images connected with this temple. The structure of the temple is of great architectural interest.

It is known that the presiding deity is *Vaithianathan* or *Vaitheesvaran*. The god is so called because of the fact that He acted as a physician to cure the wounds of the Ganas or attendants of Sri Subramanian who overcame *Surapadman* and other Asuras or demons.

The temple is facing the west. The western Raja Gopuram and kattai gopuram are several metres away from the central shrine of Sivalinga. It is so constructed that the rays of the setting Sun pass through the entrance of Gopurams and fall upon the presiding deity-Sivalinga-at a particular part of the year for a few days. Though there are some temples such as *Thirutthelicheri Thirunellika* built in Tamilnadu and elsewhere, it should be noted that it is a great achievement in the field of Dravidian temple architecture.

It is believed that once upon a time many Siddhas had anointed the Presiding deity with *amirtham* (ambrosia), and the collected and stagnated abhisheka amirtha theertham was the cause for the creation of a tank called Siddhamirtha theertham. It is also said that *Danvantri*, the Deva Physician had placed some rare medical herbs in the water current of the tank so that it might have permanent curative effect for diseases.

It is said that the steps on the four sides of Siddhamirtha tank surrounded with Thirumaligai Patthi mandapams were well constructed during the 18th century A. D.

As this sacred tank has a doom-shaped mandapam in the middle (Neerazhi mandapam), the '*Theppotsavam*' (floating festival) is celebrated with much religious interest.

Vimanam of Sri Vaithianathaswamy (upper part of sanctum) is called *Indra Vimanam*. *Upagreebathalam* has been constructed in such a way that the Indra Vimanam can be seen by the devotees from the western corridor.

Chola style of architecture was a mature style with an integrated conception of a temple. As there is a separate Amman (Thaiyalnayaki) shrine it can be said that this was an addition to the Swamy shrine done during the Later Chola Period.

As it is said that Lord Siva had come to this place with His consort Sri Parvathi as Devine Physicians, *Boothaganas* are the sculptured around cornice of the sanctum as carrying the shrine.

There are some spacious mandapams with artistic pillars. *Asthana Mandapam* (near Alankara mandapam where sandal paste — Sandana — K — Kulambu is distributed during Karthigai days) in the west corridor, *Thirumaligaipatthi* mandapams in the north and west corridors, *theerthamandapam* on the Western bank of Siddhamirtha theertham, *Vasantha mandapam* and *Kalanchiya mandapam* (Vavvalnatthi mandapam) are to be noted with architectural and silpa importance. *Thattam sutri mandapam* for Swami is now called as *Sri Shanmugavilasa Mandapam* for religious publicity.

*Sanctum, Arthamandapam* Eastern part of *Maha mandapam* are considered as the works of ancient Cholas. Because each of the *Dwarapalakas* in the gate way of Mahamandapam and Arthamandapam is having four hands and *Lingodhbhava* (Arunachalesvarar) is found in the central rich of backside outerwall of the sanctum. It is said that *Tulajiji Maharaja* had constructed the Thatticutri mandapam of Amman Sannidhi in 1767 A.D. It is said that the western part of Mahamandapam was constructed by *Thiruvaruran* of kadambanur. From the available copper plates it is known that king *Gurumurthi Nayak* had constructed the Swami mandapam starting from Amman shrine to western kattai gopuram. The front mandapam of Amman shrine was constructed by *Tungappa Chettiar* of Kanadu Kathan in 1892 A.D.

### **Sculptures and Paintings in the Temple :**

Tamilian art proper appears to have been constant by faced with the problem of giving shape to abstruse metaphysical concepts on the views of religious cultural and social atmosphere of Tamilnadu. Sculpture and paintings are

indeed so bound up with the people's religion and mythology, of which it forms the mirror, that the two cannot be considered separately. Every idol or sculptural work is a sign and symbol for the worship of the comprehensible Divine being; with the philosophical approach Hinduism is fully aware of the utility as well as limitations of idol worship. It holds that the divine sculpture is not the Supreme, but only stands for the supreme or Almighty; *Vachaspathi* says, "those who are unable to comprehend the formless are provided with form by the kind vedas out of sympathy for them. When the mind is purified by devotion to God with form, the formless supreme reveals itself".

Most of the pillars near Swami and Amman Sannadhis are with Yalis (lion like) in the upper portion and these 'Yala-t-thoongal' are generally said to be *Pallava* style of sculpture. As Cholas, Pandiyas and Nayaks also had made pillars with lion motif in some places it is difficult to trace the style and age of the pillars. Some pillars exquisitely carved with the image of hero on the prancing horse-back are found in the style of Nayak Kings. In short the pillars of different periods are found in this temple.

Stone images of Sivalingam, Sri Thaiyalnayaki, Sri Vinayakar Lord Arumuga, Navagrahas, Angaraka, Chandesar, Guha Chandesar, Badrakali, Bairavar, Veerabadrswamy, Sages like Kalava, Vamedevar, Sathanandar, Danavantri etc., and Sri Sattayappar (stucco) are of great antiquity.

There is a peculiar old statue called *Juradevathai* having three heads and three legs in the Eastern corridor.

#### **Linga Sculpture :**

The ancient sages and saints of India selected the symbol and the form of "*Lingam*" on the basis that it is invisible-Visible form of the Supreme being.

As regards the universal antiquity of Sivalinga worship Thiru. S. Viraswamy Pather, an eminent scholar and author of 'Temple and its significance' says, 'The very ancient origin of



the worship of Siva as Lingam and its prevalence in many countries of the world have been established by eminent research scholars on the strength of the relics of various kinds connected with Lingam and the construction of temples found in the West, North and South America, Mexico, West Indies, West Africa, Egypt and Africa, and in the East, Jeva, Sumatra, Indonesia and Australia. A place is called *Sivan Temple* which is on the hill near the river Colorado in North America, 10,000 years old according to research scholars. A town in Crete in the Mediterranean sea once inhabited by the ancient "Minavar" people was called *Sivan* and innumerable small Sivalingams have been unearthed there by research scholars".

Regarding the scientific approach of the image 'Linga'-interprets as follows. "Atomic scientists who investigated into the electrons which pervade and shine everywhere as atoms of atoms, have found out that in each of them at the centre of green circle, a red coloured dazzling light is shining. The green circle is signified by the *Avudai* and the red coloured light by Sivalingam. Since, throughout, the whole space is pervaded by electrons, the form of Sivalaya shrines and *Aruvuruva* Sivalinga form-*Rupa roopam* (Invisible-visible form) becomes manifestations of God."

In an ordinary approach, Lingam is '*aruvam*' (formless) as it has no limbs like face, hands and legs etc.; it is '*uruvam*' (form) as its appearance is visible to human eyes. On knowing the invisible-visible aspect of Lingam *St. Sekkizhar* sings in his *Periapuranam* as follows.

‘காணாத அருவினுக்கும் உருவினுக்கும் காரணமாய்  
நீள்நாகம் அணிந்தார்க்கு நிகழ்குறியாம் சிவலிங்கம்’

(Sakkiya Nayanar Puranam)

The presiding Lord in the form of *Sivalingam*, *Adhikara Nandhi* and *Dwajasthambams* (Flag staffs) are in the same line as per the tenets of Silpa sastra, Sivalingam, Nandhi and flag staff along with Altar (Palipetam) are to represent *Pathi*, *Pasu* and *Pasam* respectively as per Saiva Siddhanta Sastra,

The devotee who forgets the transitory world and worldly pleasures (desire for women, desire for gold or wealth, and desire for land or influence) at the Altar and he is signified by the flag staffs proceeds from the place towards the Almighty in the Sanctum. This is signified by the Adhikara Nandhi turning towards the idol in sanctum. Here one thing should be noted that the flag staff representing Dwajalingam or *thathwarma* is not one usually found in many ordinary Hindu temples.

There are two flag staffs, big one is gold coated and short one is silver coated. But of them are specimens of high artistic workmanship. It is said that the gold-coated flag staff is for the presiding deity while the silver-coated small flag staff is for 'AstaDigbalahas'.

There are several lingams, viz, Rig Veda lingam, Amara-vatheesvarar (Lingam) Viswalingam flanked with Vishalakshi, Sahasra Lingam flanked with Icchasakthi Samaveda Lingam Atharva Veda Lingam, Yajur Veda Lingam are found in the Thirumaligaipatthi of the Northern prakaram; Lingam worshipped by Sri Rama, Lingam worshipped Sri Lakshmana, Lingam worshipped by Jatayu, Lingam worshipped by Subramanian, Lingam worshipped by Suriyan, Lingam worshipped by Angarakkan are found in the Eastern Thirumaligaipatthi of the main shrine of Lord Vaithiyanathar.

It will be surprising to note that how could it be possible for the temple-builders to collect all original lingams of different eras (yugas) and instal in an order for the worship of the people. Though all the Linga-images are of great antiquity they are not for the correct historic facts. In justification it should be borne in mind that each great temple of Tamilnadu has preserved a local tradition of indigenous and Sanskrit myths, and Vaitheesvarankoil is not an exception to this.

### **Other stone sculptures**

The stone images of Sri Kamatchi, Sri Meenakshi, Sri Visalakshi, Sri Valampuri Vinayagar, Sri Bairavar, Suriyan, Danvanthri,

Sri Subramaniam flanked with His consorts Sri Devayanai and Sri Vallinayaki, and Sri Aiyana are found in the Swami Prakaram. They are all fine specimens of stone-sculpture.

As it is said that Four Vedas, Suriyan, Sri Rama, Sri Lakshmana Sri Muruga, Angarakan, Sampathi and Jatayu performed poojas to the presiding God Siva (Linga) a sculptural representation of this (all in a row of one slab) has been seen in the name of '*Kshetrapuranesvarar*' or '*Kshetrabalar*'. It is a fine specimen of sculpture made by a sculptor with creative imagination. This sculpture is enshrined in a small shrine on the courtyard between Eastern Rajagopuram and Eastern Kattai gopuram.

The images, a damsel with *Yazh* (lute), a damsel having *ahal Vilakku* in her hands are artistically sculptured in the mandapam pillars.

Pillars on the eastern side of *thattamsutri mandapam* of the Shrine of Thaiyalnayaki are having the images of *Pratapasimha Maharaja* and *Srilasri Sivagnana Paramacharya Swamigal*, tenth Guru Maha Sannidhanam of Dharmapuram mutt; pillars on the western side are having the images of Sri Mall Sri Kate rao Sri Muthukumaraswamy Thambiran. Ofcourse the kings, the Heads of mutts and other important devotees who had made substantial contributions for the construction and enlargement of the temple complex should have proper place of respect and remembrance. But it should not be in the form of images found in the temple as per the opinions of some conservative art-critics.

Thiru Jagadisa Ayyar in his book 'South indian Shrines' says as follows : 'To make human figures is said, according to the Silpa sastras, to be bad and even irreligious. It is thought far better to Present the figure of a god though it is not beautiful, than reproduce a remarkably handsome human figure. The image constructed fully according to the prescribed portions is beautiful and yield virtue; otherwise, it takes away wealth and life and daily increase grief. The image, therefore, must be rightly made according to the conventional proportions. The Sanction that compels the artist is of a religious nature. The artist must not bungle with the

work entrusted to him. The images of gods yield happiness to men and lead to heaven, but those of men lead away from heaven and produce grief. That image is beautiful which is neither above nor below the fixed proportion. But the images of the Gods, even if deformed are for the good of men. There are many injunctions against the formations of human images'.

However the *Pratimas* (human statues) are given due place of importance along with the *thirumenis* (images of deities) in the temple complex as an indispensable necessity in the later period.

The doorways (including doors) of the Sannidhis of Swami, Thayalanayaki and Selvamuthukumaraswami are covered with silver plates in such an artistic (Nagasu) workmanship as to attract the devotees towards the marvellous beauty of the deities and their shrines.

### **Bronze sculptures in the temples :**

It is a fact that the stone sculptures made great advances during the period of *Pallavas* whereas, bronze statues during the period of *Cholas* and *Pandyas*.

The ideal sculptor, with the help of his *Icha*, *Gnana*, and *Kriya Sakthi*, his strong will power and character, his intellectual superiority and meditation could cast bronze statues of international attraction.

The bronze statues found in the Vaithianathaswamy temple are the fine sculptural specimens of different periods. The statues are called *Uthsava Murthis*, because they are the centres of divine attraction during the festivals.

There are excellent bronze images Natarajar, Gangavisarjanar, Chandrasekarar, Hariharar, Kalyanasundar, Krathararjunar, Angarakan, Jatayu, Somaskandar, Singara Velar, Mahalakshmi, Draupadiamman, Badrakali, and Bitchadanar in addition to the usual images generally found in all other great Saivite temples.

The image of *Lord Nataraja* is a glorious achievement of Cholas just as the image of *Sri Somaskandar* an achievement of Pallavas.

The bronze image of *Nataraja* in Vaitheesvaran Koil is assignable to the later Chola style (about 13th century). It is a rare Nataraja flanked with two Rishis (on a pedestal) one four armed and the other with a single pair of arms. The former plays the *Panbhamukha Vadyam* corresponding to the *kuda-muzha* of Tamil music, while the latter holding the *Veena* in his left hand.

‘Agamas prescribe that on the right side of Nataraja there should be either the *Rishi Bringi* or *Bhadrakali* and hence the Rishi playing on the Panchamukka Vadyam may be taken as *Bringi*, though usually Tumburu and Narada go together. As the sage Narada is associated with his Tambura or Veena, the image placed on the pedestal on the left side may be taken as Narada,’ says Sri V. M. Narasimhan. He further notes that almost a similar image of Nataraja is still in worship at the Siva temple at *Tiruppungur* situated 5 kilometres to the west of the famous temple from which this image hails.

As the image has the foot of the uplifted leg kept higher than the knee of the standing leg, the posture of dance shown by it is to be called *Bhujanga-Lalita*. The image comes under the first of the nine postures mentioned in *Natya-Veda*. The face of Nataraja is shown in an attractive smiling attitude. So it can be said that the *rasabhava*, an important feature expected to a sculpture is well brought out by the sculptor.

In the midst of bronze statues there is a fine metal figure of *Gangavisarjanar* in this temple. Based on mythology it is said that when *Bhagiratha* prayed for the flow of the celestial river *Ganges* into this world to give salvation to his deceased uncles, the God Siva to satisfy him received the Ganges in his matted hair. The Goddess *Parvathi* resented this idea of His thus having given prominence to another lady by receiving her in the head a more elevated position; to satisfy her. He embraced the Goddess and entreated her, promising to lower the River Goddess from that elevated situation. The form of Siva based on this myth is *Ganga Visarjanar*. It is identified as ‘*Gangadaramurthy*’ by T. A. Gopinatharao (*Elements of Hindu Iconography-Vol. II, Part I*).

People attach much importance to the enchanting beauty of Sri Selvamuthukumaraswamy. The image is so divinely marvellous as to attract thousands of devotees every month during *Karthigai day*, a grand abhishegam is performed to Him. *Mandalabhishega Krithigai* coming once a year attracts a large number of devotees. After the Abhishegam, the theertham is usually distributed to the public through a metal channel fitted with nozzles which have been installed in the big mandapam in front of the Abhishega mandapam.

Generally Somaskanda, an aspect of Siva is prevalent in most Siva temples during processional occasions. Here it should be noted that Lord Siva and Goddess are seated with young Skanda standing between them. As Lord Muruga is a favourite to the presiding deities the brozne image has special significance.

The great temple owns both old and modern jewellery in gold, silver and gems worth about several lakhs. There are many silver *kavachas* (covers) for many deities, Nandhi and altar. In recent years the head of the Dharmapura Adheenam has donated Golden Kavachas to Lord Vaithianathaswami, Goddess Thaiyal-nayaki. Sri Vinayaka, Angaraka, Sri Shanmukha, Valli and Deiva-yanai. Sri Selva Muthukumaraswami is also now adorned with a precious *Navarathna Kavacham* (Golden coat of nine precious gems.)

As the Agamas stress the *Kriya pada* or *aradhana*. Agamic injunctions in the matter of aradhana should be meticulously followed in this temple. 'Panchopacharas' (five kinds of aradhanai) are performed five times, whereas '*Sodasopacharam*' is performed once at the time *sayaratchai* (evening) with much sanctity. The things used for aradhanas are artistic value. Even the plates made of gold used for aradhanas at the festival times are of artistic value (with fine engraving).

### **Wooden Sculpture :**

There were five cars (Thēr) made of wood, one for Swami, one for Amman, one for Chandesar, one for Sri Vinayakar and one for Sri Selva Muthukumaraswamy; Now there are only three cars for 'therottam'. All the cars are delicately carved with fine images

based on mythological acts of the deities. Every car will be considered as a prototype of the temple. The symbolism of the car is significant as it explains the principle of the body in the process of movement. The car represents the body and the motive force, the deity kept in it represents the soul. All the particulars and principles of the body are generally embodied in the car.

The car festival unites all kinds of people high or low, old or young, wealthy or poor, male or female in a common religious fervour and duty. Scriptures lay down that there is no need for anybody to take bath after having dragged the car during the car festival.

*Soorasamharam* is celebrated in connection with the *kandasasti* festival. The image of *Sooran* with different separate heads is a fine wooden sculpture with colour painting.

#### **Suthai (stucco) sculpture :**

Generally all things that are seen in the universe find a place in the Gopuram. The Rajagopuram symbolises the vision of God in resplendent glory in the heart of the advanced aspirant.

Mythological subjects from the *puranas* and *tantras* are the favourite and the popular tendency to treat the conception of luxuriant mythology with exuberant fancy has full play in the creation of sutha images on gopurams. In short the puranic matters dealing with the leelas or miracles of the deities are seen depicted as sutha sculptures on gopurams. Those who are interested in this temple-art can approach and look at the images of the gopurams patiently and understand the message they convey and the philosophical truths they reveal. Such a knowledge may kindle the religious fervour to know more and more the greatness of God and the miracles performed by Him.

As regards the devotion of God, *Saint kannapa's* love for God has no parallel in the world of saivite religion as mentioned by *St. Manickavasagar* in His *Thiruvagasam* (கண்ணப்பனொப்பதோர் அன்பின்மை கண்ட பின்' — *Thirukkothumbi*). The

scene of plucking his (Kannappa's) eye to fix on the eye of Lord Siva is well sculptured in stucco. This sutha sculpture can be found in the East Rajagopuram.

Though sutha sculptures of gopuram and Vimanam deal much with the acts of Almighty and Omnipresent they are not given superiority as stone image or bronze sculpture in the shrines having abhisekams and archanas. In support of this point Thiru. S. Viraswami Pather explains, 'just as a motor car is useful for travel, only if the machine in the car is in proper working order' the image becomes effective only if a *Yantra* (a mettalic plate with chakras or mythical diagrams inscribed on it) is placed under it, duly consecrated. The Yantra is kept potent and powerful by performing rituals regularly in regard to the image as prescribed by Agamas. There is one special stucco image called *Sattanathar* on the southern side of the main sanctum. It can be claimed as a proto type of Sattanathar enshrined in the Siva temple of Sirkazhi.

As regards the Sutha sculptures or stuc-works, one idol of *Mahasadasivamurthi* is found in a peculiar manner on the second west (Kattai) gopuram of Sri Vaithianathasamy temple. It is supposed to be a unique form in south India; so much can be said also of North India.

Mahasadasivamurthi is represented with *twenty five* faces, whereas, Sadasivamurthi with *five* faces. The image of Sadasivamurthi also is found in one temple gopuram.

In this *Mahasadasivamurthi*, one other peculiarity is also observed; the heads are arranged in tiers in arithmetical progress. The topmost tier has only one head, the next one below has three, the next five and on till the last tier has nine heads. Only those heads which are on borders of this triangle of heads could be adorned with *Jatamakutas* and they alone are actually ornamented with these in the sculpture.

Vidwan M. Viravel pillai in his book entitled '*Sivaparakkiramam*' says as follows; "The Parabrahmam or the Sachchidhananda



is revered according to five kinds of actions as *Vishnu*, *Rudra*, *Mahesvara*, *Sadasiva*, and *Parasakthi*. This supreme being takes different names according to philosophical expositions concerning *Aparavindu Paravindu* and *Paranadha*. Mahasadasivamurthi is represented with twenty five faces. He is the Primordial cause of the all worlds. The Upanishats speak of them eulogistically. The eighth saying of the *Vajasaneya Upanishat* is as follows: He is every where. He is brilliant, He assumes nobody, He is pure. He has no sins. He is intelligent. He controls the will. He is above all elements. He exists by himself. He creates all things permanently equally and according to the nature of each of them!

The philosophical sciences say that is the original light, the Master who governs everything and the primordial form, He is Mahasadasiva, the light of knowledge governing all beings moving or unmoving, His will and power cannot be known or described even by vedas. This is the decisive opinion of philosophers."

It is believed that the smile of Mahasadasivamurthi will dispel the Karma—*Akamyam*, *Sanchitham* and *Prarartham* of the pious souls. There is one version that all the deities, devas and worlds are in unison of this Murthi.

There are 64 Siva forms, of which the following nine are usually worshipped in almost all the Siva temples :

- 1) Lingam 2) Lingothbhavar 3) Chandrasekarar 4) Somaskandar
- 5) Bhairavar 6) Veerabhadrar 7) Niruthamurthi Nataraja
- 8) Dakshinamurthi and 9) Bhikshadanamurthi.

There are different forms of Dakshinamurthi such as *Yoga Dakshinamurthi*, *Veenadara Dakshinamurthi*, *gana Dakshinamurthi* and *Vyakyana Dakshinamurthi* found in the Agamas.

Dakshinamurthi is described as a young preceptor. He is sitting under a banyan tree on *Veerasana* preaching in silence the gospel of the highest goal viz. Bliss or liberation to four old sages *Sanaka*, *Sanandana*, *Sanathana* and *Sanathkumara*. He teaches through *Chinmudra*, the thumb end the fore finger touching each

other at the tips. The thumb represents *Pathi* or Siva (Paramanma), the fore finger *Pasu*-the individualized self (Jeevanma), and the three other fingers, *Pasam*-the three malas, viz. *Anavam* (Ego), *Krnmam* (sin caused by one's evil acts) and *Maya* (Delusion). It is further said that Music, sciences and arts are taught to the world by Him through the four sages. The sages were originally like rivers. After initiation, they get enlightened and their pure consciousness becomes identical with Absolute consciousness and they merge with the Supreme being as the rivers finally mix with ocean.

This philosophic symbolism of Dakshinamurthi is made to be known to the public through stone and stucco images. The stone image is found on the southern back side wall of the sanctum of the presiding deity. Many stucco images of Dakshinamurthi in several forms are found on gopurams.

*Pichandavamurthi* is described as one of the mighty murthis (a form of God) of the Hindu mythology. He is described as a beggar collecting alms in a human skull, riding on a bull, and wandering over forests and cremation grounds though He is considered the creator of all wealth and pleasure. The motto of this incarnation is said to teach the lesson of humility to the self-conceited rishis and their consorts of *Darukavanam*.

An old stucco image of Pichandavar is found on the west kattai Gopuram. An excellent bronze image of Pichandavar is used as uthsavamurthi during the festivals.

The form of *Gajasamharamurthi* (slayer of the elephant) signifies the heroic act of Lord Siva. Doubting the supremacy of God Siva, sages of Darukavanam created a crude elephant to kill the Lord. Siva took the form of Gajasamharamurthi, killed the elephant and wore its skin as a garment. The fine specimen of Gajasamharamurthy in stucco work is found on the Eastern & Western Raja Gopurams.

Images of *UrthuvaThandavamurthi* in stucco are found-one on Eastern Rajagopuram and another on Eastern inner Gopuram.

Images of *Kalasamahara murthi* and *Biaravar* in stucco are found on the western inner Gopuram.

There are many *Nataraja* images flanked with and without the sages *Pathnajai* and *Vyakrapathar* are found in many places on the Gopurams.

The stucco image of *Ravana* as carrying the mount kailas including God Siva and Goddess (i.e., Kailasa Vahanam) is found on the Western Rajagopuram.

A peculiar shaped *Sarabamurthi* in stucco is found on the Eastern Gopuram. The Puranic version of this murthi is as follows As the terrific nature of *Narsaimha* (Man-Lion) in connection of Thirumal continued even after the destruction of the demon *Hiranyakasipu* and this caused trouble and fear to Devas, God Siva assumed the *Saraba* (bird-like) form and pacified Narasimha by trampling Him under His feet. The consecration and worship of this image is supposed to destroy enemies, secure success in battles, cure all ailments and procure every good to life. There are fine stone sculptures of this form in the temples at *Chidambaram* and *Darasuram* (near Kumbakonam). The metal figure in the temple at *Thirubhuvanam* can be regarded a sculptura masterpiece.

The portrayals of Avatars and leelas of *Thirumal* in stucco such as Sri Narasimhar, Sri Venugana krishnan, Sri Rama, the scene of Gajendramoksham etc., are found on the Gopurams.

The different images of *Sakthi* are also found on the Gopurams. Stucco images of Sri Brahma, Sri Lingodhbhavar, Sri Gajalakshmi, Panchamuga Vinayagar, Digbalakas, Gangalar, Dwara-balagar, Sri Aiyanar are placed in proper places on the Gopurams. The churning of the *Parkadal* (ocean of milk) by Devas and Asuras is well portrayed in stucco on the Western Rajagopuram. The puranic aspect of churning the ocean of milk is held in high esteem not only in India but also abroad. It should be borne in mind that the scene of churning the ocean of milk had been artistically sculptured in a pannel of very large size at Angkorwat in Combodia and it is still regarded as the prestigious national

wealth of that country. It is an impressive achievement in the world of Dravidian sculpture.

The marriage scene of Sri Meenakshi with Sri Somasundarar is found in stucco on the Eastern inner gopuram.

As regards the stucco work of modern age the marriage scene of Sri *Deivayanai* with Lord Muruga is portrayed at the top of the old theerthavari mandapam north of the Siddhamirtha tank ; there is also a marriage scene of *Sri Valli* with Lord Muruga portrayed at the top of the mandapa in front of Shanmuga shrine. The shrine of *Badrakali* has fine specimens of modern stucco work.

### **Significance of Paintings in the temple :**

There are ancient and modern styles of Painting found on the walls and ceilings of mandapams. They are also found on the ceilings and side walls of the door ways of Gopurams. The ancient wall paintings at the northern entrance of Siddhamirtha tank from the old theerthavari mandapam should be noted with artistic interest.

The portrayal of Lord Vaithianathar giving '*chentu*' (boquet) to Sri Selva muthukumaraswamy, the stucco picture of Kamadenu showering its milk on the image of Lingam as a form of worship, the painting of *Jatayu moksham* are some of the remarkable specimens of portrait paintings of the modern period.

### **Significance of Dance and Music in the Temple :**

Some dance poses are sculptured in and around the shrines and on the gopurams. During the festivals, the art of dancing was very much encouraged as a form of worship until recent years. It is said that after the '*Veethi Valam*' (procession) Lord Vaithianathar used to round thrice the shrine in the *thattisutri mandapam*. The dancing girls with *ahalvilakku* in their hands used to dance to the nattuvangam and music while following the presiding deity.

The dance performances took place in front of large gathering in the spacious halls during the festivals.

Musical instruments used in the temple worship can be classified as-1) Those used in processions, when the Deities are taken round the Māda streets on the occasion of the festivals  
2) Instruments performed during the rituals inside the temples  
3) Special instruments played in some particular temples.

There are regulations for Nathaswaram music during the times of poojas and procession.

As regards the nithya Pooja, *Boopalaraga* was played in Nathaswaram in the early hours-First Sandhi, *Thanyasi* in the second sandhi, *Mathyamavathi* in the Uch-chi-kalam (Noon), *Poori Kalyani* in the sayaratchai (Evening), *Nattai* in the second kalam, and *Anandabhairavi* in *Arthajamam* (midnight)

During the festival times the deities are taken in procession (veethivalam round māda streets of the temple. In the beginning when Swamy (Uthasavar) comes out of the shrine Nadasvara vidwans play the Ragam—(*Mallari*). After the flag-hoisting they usually play Ragas based on '*thikkupandanam*' (in all sandhis)

|        |                                   |   |   |                  |
|--------|-----------------------------------|---|---|------------------|
| (i.e.) | Magarakkurinchi<br>(Madyamavathi) | } | — | in Brahma sandhi |
|        | Seekamaram<br>(Nathanamakkriyai)  | } |   | in Varuna        |
|        | Thakkesi<br>(Ramagiri)            | } |   | in Vayu Sandhi   |
|        | Thakkaragam<br>(Malavagiri)       | } | — | Kubera sandhi    |
|        | Panchakari<br>(Sankaraparanam)    | } |   | Esanam sandhi    |
|        | Kantharam<br>(Velavalli)          | } | — | Indra sandhi     |
|        | Kolli<br>(Varali)                 |   |   | Agni sandhi      |
|        | Karuchikam<br>(Kujjari)           |   |   | Yama sandhi      |
|        | Nattapadai<br>(Bhairavi)          | } | — | Niruthi sandhi   |

There are many musical instruments such as Nathasvaram, Taval, Mukhaveenai, Thirucchinnam, thutthi, ekkalam, coch, namari, Swarnamandali used in the rituals.

In this temple there was a person who used to perform on the 'Swara Mandali during the calm rituals in the night. He was called 'Swara mandaliPandaram'

As the image of *Panchamukha Vadyam* is found in the pedestal of the bronze sculpture of Sri Nataraja it can be construed that there might have been a Panchamukhavadyam in use during the temple rituals of Vaitheesvaran koil

### **Significance of festivals in view of fine arts :**

Tamilnadu is a sacred land of festivals as it is a land of temples. Temple festivals provide ample opportunity for artists and craftsman to display their artistic talents.

Pancha Boothas (the five elements) *Prithivi, Appu, Tejas, Vayu* and *Akasa* are worshipped as Gods in specified seasons in most of the great temples. The following festivals are celebrated in Vaitheesvaran koil.

The festival of *Avani Moolam* can be taken as a form of worship to Prithivi (earth) though it is earnest by celebrated in the religious memory of siva-leela (Thiruvilayadal) at Madurai.

*Karthigai-deepam* on Karthigai day on the full moon day in the month of Karthigai (November-December) is celebrated as an worship to Tejas (fire) though it is celebrated on Puranic version as follows :

In days of yore there arose a contest between *Thirumal* and *Brahma* as to their relative superiority, In the course of the heated controversy there ascended a huge flame, which is said to have been no other than *Lord Siva* appearing to convince them that there was yet one superior to them. At that time Brahma took the form of Swan and flew up above to discover the top of the flame, and Vishnu became Varaha or Boar and tore the earth with

his powerful tusk and tried to discover the base of the flame. This scene, called the '*Lingodhbhava*' is sculptured in the temple and this myth is celebrated as karthikai Deepam festival here.

The festival of *Navarathri* Saraswathi pooja is celebrated as a form of worship to Vayu (air) though it is intended for the worship of Sri Durga, Sri Lakshmi and Sri Sarasvathi in *Purattasi* (September-October). It is said that the glorious *Thirumalainayakar* was much interested in celebrating the Navarathri festival with an extra ordinary significance. This has become a colourful festival in all great temples of Tamilnadu from his period. The temples of Vaitheesvaram also attaches much importance to the artistic celebration of Navarathri.

Though there are festivals in Vaitheesvarankoil *Panguni Utthiram* (27 days) *Adipooram* (10 days) *Vaikai Vasanthothsavam* (10 days), *Aippasi Kanda Sashti* (6 days) *Thai Mahothsavam* (10 days) are to be noted as big festivals of this temple.

During the festivals '*Uthsavamurthi*' are attractively decorated with precious ornaments, costly costumes, colourful fragrant flowers, and seated on *Vahanams* of artistic value. They are taken in procession in the māda streets on these occasions mainly for the sake of the very old and the deformed, the sick and the suffering who are not able to offer worship in the temple. The devotional hymns that are heard by the people in the streets inspire them to be more pious.

*Indra Vizha* (festival) was celebrated for 27 days in the erstwhile Poompuhar during the post-sangam period ; perhaps under the influence of Indra Vizha. the *Panguni Utthiram* festival is also celebrated for 27 days in Vaitheesvarankoil. During the *Theppothsavam* (floating festival celebrated in connection with the festival of Panguni Utthiram Lord Vinayaka is placed ceremonially in a daily decorated float illuminated by flourescent lamps and taken round the shrine in the centre of the tank, with the chanting of hymns and other sounds of temple musical instruments. The float-festival might have been started by the Nayak kings.

As regards the beautiful Vahanas of Vaitheesvaran koil, *Palanquins*, *Karpaga Virutcham*, *Padmavahanam*, *Bootham*, *Yanai* (elephant) *Vahanam*, *Kamdahenu*, *Simham*, *Kili* (Parrot) *Vahanam Velliratham* (silver car) *Velli rishapams* (Silver Bulls Big and small) *Thangamail* (Golden peacock) *Annam* (Swan) *Peruchchali* (Bandicoot) *Velli Idumban* (Idumban made of silver) are to be noted for their excellent artistic workmanship. *Sapparam* (Sakopuram-resembling a car-specially constructed by artistic craftsmen of *alai* work) in which Sri Selvamuthu Kumaraswami is seated and taken in procession on the sixth day of Sri Kandasashti festival. The procession of deity on every day during the festival has puranic significance.

### **Literary contribution to this temple :**

The hymns of Saints Thirugnanasambandar, Appar, Arunagirinathar, Kalamega pulavar, Ramalinga Swamikal, Muthuswamy Dikshidar are in greatness of this temple and deities. Sri Kumara-guruswamikal has sung a prabhandam called ' *Sri Muthukumaraswami Pillai-t-tamil* ' in praise of Sri Selvamuthukumaraswami and the temple. Padikasu thambiran has sung a prabhandam called ' *Pullirukku Velur Kalampakam* ' Vaduganatha desigar has sung one Puranam called ' *Velur thalapuranam* '. There is one *anthathi* Called Sri Muthu Kumarasami Anthathi' written by Muthukumaradasar. These literary works throw much light on the artistic and religious glory of this temple.

### **Conclusion :**

In the great temple of Vaitheesvaran, equal importance is given to Sri Vaithianathar, Sri Thaiyalnayaki and Selva Muthukumaraswami in certain aspects. As the Sri Selva Muthukumaraswamy Sannathi is situated in between the shrines of Sri Vaithianathar and Sri Thayalnayaki it is interesting to remember the image of Sri Somaskandar (The standing pose of Kandan found inbetween Siva and Uma)

From the harmonious divine beauty of the different structures of this famous temple one can easily imagine the harmony of the environment, the life and thought, the philosophy and nature all around with the creative spirit and its expression of art.



Everybody in Tamilnadu has a religious duty to help the temple authorities to maintain the temples and encourage the temple-arts as the forms of rich heritage of Tamils.

‘பேராயி ரம்பரவி வானோ ரேத்தும்  
பெம்மானைப் பிரிவிலா அடியார்க் கென்றும்  
வாராத செல்வம் வருவிப் பாளை  
மந்திரமுந் தந்திரமு மருந்து மாகித்  
தீராதோய் தீர்த்தருள வல்லான் தன்னைத்  
தீரிபுரங்கள் தீயெழுத்திண் சிலைகைக் கொண்ட  
போரானைப் புள்ளிருக்கு வேளு ரானைப்  
போற்றுதே ஆற்றநாள் போக்கி னேனே-திருநாவுக்கரசர்.  
(ஆருந்திருமுறை)

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# கோவிலும் இசைக்கருவிகளும்

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தமிழகத்தில் கோவில் இல்லாத ஊரைக் காண்பது அரிது. கோவில்கள் இறைவனை வழிபடும் இடமாக மட்டும் அல்லாமல் தமிழ்ச் சமுதாயத்தின் நல்வாழ்வில் நாட்டங்கொண்ட நிலையங்களாகவும் விளங்கின. ஊர்கள் ஒவ்வொன்றும் கோயிலை மையமாகக் கொண்டே விளங்கின. ஆலயங்களில் கல்வி நிலையம், மருத்துவ மனை, நூல் நிலையம் ஆகியவை இருந்ததற்கான வரலாற்றுச் சான்றுகள் உள்ளன. மக்கள் அற உணர்வோடு நல்வாழ்வு வாழ்வதற்குரிய உதவிகள் பலவற்றையும், அருள் உணர்வுடன் புரிந்து வந்த தமிழகத்தின் திருக்கோயில்கள் இந்திய நாகரிக வரலாற்றில் ஒப்பியர்வற்ற சமுதாய நிலையங்களாக விளங்குகின்றன. இங்கு அழகுக்கலைகள் பல உருவாகியிருக்கின்றன. சிற்பக்கலை, ஓவியக்கலை, படிமக்கலை, நாட்டியக்கலை, இசைக்கலை ஆகியவை முதன்மையானவை. இவை உருவாவதற்கு தமிழகக் கோயில்கள் பேரளவிற்குக் காரணமாக இருந்து வருவதைக் கலையியல் அறிஞர்கள் சுட்டிக் காட்டியுள்ளனர். கோயில் வளர்த்த இசைக்கலையில் இசைக்கருவிகளுக்குப் பெரும் பங்குண்டு. மேலும் இறைவழிபாட்டின் போது பலவித இசைக்கருவிகள் வாசிக்கப் பெற்றன. கோயில்கள் வளர்த்த இசைக்கருவிகளைப் பற்றியும், இசைக்கலை பற்றியும் இனிக் காண்போம்.

கோயில்களில் தெய்வ வழிபாட்டின் அங்கமாகவே இசையும் வாத்தியங்களும் விளங்கின. 16 பிரிவுகளைக் கொண்ட ஷோடசோபசாரத்தில் 14-ஆம் அங்கமாக இசையும், இசைக்கருவிகளும் குறிப்பிடப்படுகின்றன.

இசை, தமிழர் வாழ்க்கையுடன் ஒன்றி விளங்குவதைப் பல்வேறு நிலைகளில் காணலாம். இத்தகைய சிறப்பு வாய்ந்த இசை வடிவாய் இருப்பான் இறைவன் என நம் சமயக்குரவர்கள் போற்றியுள்ளனர். இறைவன்

‘எழிசையாய்’, ‘இசைப்பயனாய்’

‘இயலவன்’, ‘இசையவன்’

‘இசை ஏழுகந்தார்’

‘பாட்டகத்து இசையாகி நின்றானை’,

‘பண்ணின் இசையாக நின்றாய் போற்றி’,

என்றெல்லாம் போற்றப்படுகின்றார். இறைவன், இசையில் மிக்க ஈடுபாடு உடையவன் என்பதை ‘இசை விரும்பும் கூத்தனார்’ என்ற தொடரிலிருந்து அறியலாம். இசையுடன் பலவித இசைக்கருவிகளையும் அவர் விரும்புவார் என திருமறைப்பாடல்கள் எடுத்துரைக்கின்றன.

“தக்கை தண்ணுமை தாளம் வீணை தகுனிச்சம் சினை சல்லரி  
கொக்கரை, குடமுழவீனோடு இசை கூடிப்பாடி நின்றாவீர்”

தமிழ்நாட்டுக் கோயில்களுக்கு ஒரு தனிச் சிறப்பு உண்டு. ஆழ்வார்களும், நாயன்மார்களும் தலங்கள் தோறும் சென்று பாசுரங்களையும் திருப்பதிகங்களையும் பாடியுள்ளனர். அகப்பாட்டாக மட்டும் இருந்து வந்த இசையைத் தெய்வீக இசையாக மாற்றினார்கள். இசை வளர்ச்சியில் இக்காலம் சிறந்ததொரு காலமாகக் கருதப்படு

கோயில்களில் தெய்வவழிபாட்டின் போது பலவித இசைக்கருவிகள் வாசிக்கப்பெற்றன. இசைக் களைப் பற்றி அறிய துணை நிற்பன கல்வெட்டுச் செய்திகள் மற்றும் சிற்பங்கள் ஆகியனவாம். கோயில்களில் பலவித இசைக்கருவிகளுடன் மத்தளம் போன்ற தோற்கருவிகளும் வாசிக்கப் பெற்றன. இத்தகைய வாத்தியங்களை வாசிப்பவர்களை ‘உவச்சர்கள்’ என கல்வெட்டுக்கள் அழைக்கின்றன. ‘உவச்ச’ என்றால் அடித்தல் என்பது பொருள். இவர்களுடைய பணிக்காக நிலங்கள் தானமாக அளிக்கப்பெற்றன. இவ்வாறு வழங்கப்பெற்ற நிலங்கள் ‘உவச்சக்காணி’ ‘உவச்சப்புரம்’, ‘உவச்ச விருத்தி’ என அழைக்கப்பட்டன. இவர்கள் தங்கள் வருவாயிலிருந்து வரி செலுத்த வேண்டியிருந்தது. இது ‘உவச்சவரி’ என கல்வெட்டுகளில் அழைக்கப்படுகிறது. உவச்சர்களுக்கு ஊதியமாக நாள்தோறும் நெல் அளிக்கப்பட்டதாகப் பல கோயில் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் கூறுகின்றன. உவச்சப் பணி புரிவோருக்கு வீட்டு மனை அளிக்கப்பெற்றதாக மன்னார் கோயில் கல்வெட்டு கூறுகிறது. இவர்கள் வேண்டும் ஆட்களை நியமித்துக்கொள்ள அதிகாரம் இருந்திருக்கிறது. இவ்வாறு கல்வெட்டுச் செய்திகளால் உவச்சப்பணி செய்த ஒரு பிரிவினர் பற்றி அறிய முடிகிறது.<sup>1</sup>

மேலும் கல்வெட்டுக்களின் வாயிலாகக் கோயில்களில் நடைபெற்ற பல்வேறு நிகழ்ச்சியின்போது வாசிக்கப்பெற்ற வாத்தியங்களைப் பற்றியும் என்னென்ன கருவிகள் வாசிக்கப்பட்டன என்பது பற்றியும் அறியப்படுகின்றன. பல இசைக்கருவிகளின் எடையும் கல்வெட்டுக்களிலே குறிக்கப்படுகின்றன.

திருப்பதிகம்:-

கோயில்களிலே திருப்பதிகங்களைப் பாடுவதற்குத் தானம் அளிக் கப்பட்டதாகப் பல கோயில் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் குறிப்பிடுகின்றன. திருப்பதிகங்களைப் பாடும்பொழுது உடன் என்னென்ன இசைக் கருவிகள் வாசிக்கப்பெற்றன என்பதையும் குறிக்கின்றன. திருவெறும்பூர் கோயிலில் திருப்பதிகம் பாடும்பொழுது உடுக்கையும், தாளமும் வாசிக்கப்பெற்றன.<sup>2</sup> தஞ்சைப் பெரிய கோயிலில் திருப்பதி கங்களை ஒதுவதற்கு 48 பேர்கள் நியமிக்கப்பட்டனர். பக்க வாத்திய மாக உடுக்கையும் கொட்டி மத்தளமும் வாசிக்கப்பட்டன. உடுக்கை வாசித்தவன் சூரிய தேவ கிரமணித்தன் ஆன ஆலால விடங்க உடுக்கை விச்சாதிரன் என்பவன் ஆவான். அவன் இக் கலையில் வல்லவன் ஆதலின் 'உடுக்கை விச்சாதிரன்' எனப்பெயர் பெற்றான். கொட்டி மத்தளம் வாசித்தவன் பெயர் குணப்புகழ் மருதனான சிகா சிவன் ஆவான். சிலருக்கு 'வாத்யமாராயன்' என்ற பட்டமும் வழங்கப்பெற்றிருந்ததை அறிகிறோம்.<sup>3</sup>

திருப்பதிகங்களைப் பற்றி நினைக்கும்பொழுது திருப்பதிகங் களுடன் வாசிக்கும் இசைக்கருவிகளுடன் தொடர்பான வரலாற்று நிகழ்ச்சிகள் நினைவுக்கு வருகின்றன. சீர்காழிக்கு மேற்கே திருக் கோலக்கா என்ற கோயில் உள்ளது. இங்கு திருஞானசம்பந்தர் இறைவனால் பொன் தாளம் அளிக்க பெற்றார். திருஞான சம்பந்தர் பெருமானுக்குப் பொற்றாளம் வழங்கியபோது அத்தாளத்தில் ஓசை உண்டாகும்படி அம்பிகை செய்தார். அதனால் இங்குள்ள அம்பிகைக்கு 'ஓசை கொடுத்த நாயகி' என்று பெயர்.

திருஞானசம்பந்தர் காலத்திலேயே திருநீலகண்ட யாழ்ப்பாணரும் அவர் மனைவியார் மதங்க சூளாமணியாரும் ஞான சம்பந்தர் பாடியருளிய பதிகங்களைத் தம் யாழில் இசைத்துப் பின்னர்த் தமிழ் நாடெங்கும் சென்று அத்தெய்வப் பாடல்களை இசையுடன் பரப் பினார் என்பது வரலாறு அறிந்த ஒன்றாகும்.

ஸ்ரீ பலி:-

கோயிலில் நடைபெறும் நிகழ்ச்சிகளில் முக்கியமான நிகழ்ச்சி ஸ்ரீ பலி என்னும் சடங்காகும். இதில் சிவபெருமான் அல்லது திருமாலின் உருவம் இருக்கும். இத் திரு உருவம் வீதி உலா செல்லும் பொழுது பலவித வாத்தியங்கள் வாசிக்கப்பட்டதாகப் பல கோயில் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் கூறுகின்றன. திருக்குருகாவூர் (சீர்காழிவட்டம்) கோயிலில் ஸ்ரீ பலியின் போது வாசிக்க ஒன்பது பேர்கள் நியமிக்கப் பட்டார்கள் என்று அக்கோயில் கல்வெட்டு கூறுகிறது.<sup>4</sup> திருமணஞ்

சேரி கோயிலில் காளம், மணி, தொங்கும் விளக்கு ஆகியவற்றை இந் நிகழ்ச்சிக்காகச் சோழிய வாணியன் என்பவன் அளித்தான் எனக் கூறுகிறது.<sup>5</sup> திருவொற்றியூர், திருச்சாத்துறை ஆகிய கோயிலில் நான்கு காளம் ஊதிகள் நியமிக்கப்பட்டனர்.<sup>6</sup> இதைத் தவிர சேகண்டிகை என்ற வாத்தியமும் வாசிக்கப்பட்டது. திருவேள்விக்குடி கோயிலில் 'ஸ்ரீ பலி கொண்ட காளம் ஊத இரண்டு ஆளுக்கும் சேகண்டிகை கொட்ட ஓராளுக்கும்' ஆக நிபந்தம் செய்து கொடுக்கப் பட்டது.<sup>7</sup> திருவாமாத்தூர் கோயிலில் இந்நிகழ்ச்சியின் போது செண்டைக் கொட்டுவதற்காக நிலம் தானமளிக்கப்பட்டது.<sup>8</sup> திருச்சிக்கு அருகில் உள்ள நெடுங்களம் கோயிலில் மத்தளி (Copper tipped Mattali) இந்நிகழ்ச்சிக்காக வழங்கப்பட்டதாகக் கல்வெட்டு கூறு கின்றது.<sup>9</sup> மேற்கண்ட செய்திகளால் ஸ்ரீ பலி நிகழ்ச்சியின்போது பலவித இசைக் கருவிகள் வாசிக்கப்பட்டதை அறிகிறோம்.

இதைத்தவிர பொதுவான பல கோயில்களில் பலவித இசைக்கருவி களான உடுக்கை, செண்டை, மத்தளம், கொட்டி மத்தளம், சகடை, சங்கு, மணி, வீணை, சேகண்டிகை, காளம், பாடலியம் போன்ற இசைக்கருவிகள் வாசிக்கப்பட்டதைக் கல்வெட்டுக்களின் மூலம் அறி கிறோம். இதைத் தவிர கோயிலில் உள்ள சிற்பங்களில் பலவித இசைக் கருவிகளைக் காணலாம். இவற்றைக் கூர்ந்து நோக்கினால் அதன் வடிவமைப்பில் காலப்போக்கில் பல்வேறு மாற்றங்கள் ஏற் பட்டுள்ளதை அறியலாம். இனி, பல்வேறு இசைக்கருவிகளைப் பற்றியும், அதன் வடிவமைப்பில் ஏற்பட்ட மாற்றங்களைப் பற்றியும், வரலாற்றுச் செய்திகளையும் ஒருங்கே காணலாம்.

**உடுக்கை:-**

சிவபெருமான் நடனமாடும் கோலத்தில் ஆடவல்லான் பெரு மானாக இருக்கும்பொழுது உடுக்கையை வலது கரத்தில் ஏந்தி இருப்பார். இதைத் 'துடி' டமருகம்' எனவும் அழைப்பார். உடுக்கை யிலிருந்து வரும் ஒலியால் அண்டபிண்ட சராசரங்கள் எல்லாம் பெரிய தீயிலிருந்து பொறிகளும் ஊற்று நீரிலிருந்து குமிழிகளும் வருவன போன்று இறைவனிடமிருந்து தோன்றுகின்றன என்பதைக் குறிக்கும். அதுவே சிருஷ்டி அல்லது ஆக்கத்தை உணர்த்துகிறது. உலகம் சப்தத்தில் பிறந்து அதிலேயே நிலைபெற்றிருப்பது என வேதம் கூறு கிறது.

'ஒலி தமருகம் உறை தருகன்' என இறைவன் போற்றப்படு கின்றார். மேலும் சிவபெருமான் கங்காளமூர்த்தி வடிவத்தில் இருக் கும் பொழுது உடுக்கையைச் சிறு குச்சியால் அடித்துச் செல்வது போலக்

காணப்படும். சிவபெருமான் ஆடும்பொழுது திருமால் உடுக்கையை அடிக்கும் நிலையில் உள்ள சிற்பங்களைத் திருவொற்றியூர், காஞ்சி புரம் மற்றும் திருவலஞ்சுழி நாயக்கர் கால ஓவியம் ஆகியவற்றில் காணலாம். சிதம்பரம் கோயிலில் சிவகாமி அம்மன் சந்நிதியில் சுற்றியுள்ள பிரகாரத்தில் கீழ்ப்பகுதியில் நடனமாடும் பெண்களின் சிற்பத்தொடரினைக் காணலாம். அதில் பல பெண்கள் உடுக்கையை கையில் ஏந்தி நடனமாடுவதைக் காணலாம்.

**குடமுழா:-**

சிவபெருமான் நடராஜர் வடிவத்தில் இருக்கும்பொழுது காலடியின் கீழே பறை, குடமுழா முதலிய வாத்தியங்கள் காட்டப்பெற்றிருக்கும். 'பறை கொட்ட நட்புருள் ஆடுவார்' எனக் குறிக்கிறார் சுந்தரர். சிவபெருமானின் ஆனந்த தண்டவத்தின்போது நந்தி குடமுழா வாசித்தார் எனத் திருப்பதிகங்கள் கூறுகின்றன.

கட்டு வட மெட்டு முறுவட்ட  
முழுவத்தில் கொட்டு கர மிட்ட  
வொலி தட்டும் வகை நந்திக்  
கிட்ட மிக நட்டமவையிட்டவர்

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இந்த இசைக்கருவியைப் பஞ்சமுக வாத்தியம் என அழைப்பர். இந்த இசைக் கருவியை அருணகிரிநாதர் 'குட பஞ்சமுகி' என அழைக்கிறார். இவ் வாத்தியத்தின் வடிவமைப்பில் பல மாறுதல்கள் அடைந்துள்ளன. பல்லவர் காலச் சிற்பங்களில் செங்குத்தாக நின்ற நிலையில் பறை ஒன்று காணப்படுகிறது. திருப்பரங்குன்றம் குடவரைக்கோயிலில் நடனமாடும் இறைவன் முன்பு நந்தி மத்தளம் வாசிப்பதாக ஒரு சிற்பம் உள்ளது. இங்குச் செங்குத்தாக நின்ற நிலையில் இரு பாறைகள் காணப்படுகின்றன. இது முற்காலப் பாண்டியர் காலத்தைச் சேர்ந்ததாகும். பல்லவர் காலச் சிற்பங்களிலும், முற்கால சோழர் காலச் சிற்பங்களிலும் ஒரு முகம் உடையதாகவே காணப்படுகின்றது. ஐந்து முகம் உடைய குடமுழா வாத்தியத்தை 12 - 13 ஆம் நூற்றாண்டு முதல் சிற்பங்களிலும் செப்புத் திருமேனிகளிலும் காணமுடிகிறது. இம் மாதிரியான வடிவத்தை நாயக்கர் காலச் சிற்பங்கள் வரை காணலாம். ஐந்து முகம் உடைய குடமுழா வாத்தியத்தை சிற்பங்களில் விருத்தாசலம், சிதம்பரம் நிருத்த சபை, மதுரைப் புதுமண்டபம் முதலிய இடங்களில் காணலாம். இதைத்தவிர நடராசர் செப்புத்திருமேனிகளில் இறைவன் காலடியில் நந்தி வாசிக்கும் நிலையில் திருப்பைஞ்ஞிலி, செந்தலை, திருப்புன் கூர், திருவாலங்காடு, தரங்கம்பாடி ஆகிய கோயில்களில் காணலாம்.

திருவாரூர், திருவலஞ்சுழி ஆகிய கோயில்களில் உள்ள நாயக்க, மராட்டியர் கால ஓவியங்களிலுல் ஐந்து முகம் உடைய குடமுழாவைக் காணலாம்.

தற்பொழுது இவ்வாத்தியம் திருவாரூர், திருத்துறைப்பூண்டி ஆகிய கோயில்களிலும், சென்னை அருங்காட்சியகத்திலும் உள்ளன. திருவாரூரில் இறைவன் அசபா நடனம் ஆடும் கோலம் கொண்டு வீதியுலா எழுந்தருளும்பொழுது இவ்வாத்தியம் வாசிக்கப்படுகிறது இதை 'பாரசவர்' என்ற குலத்தோர் வாசிக்கின்றனர். அண்மையில் கிடைத்த 'பஞ்சமுக வாத்திய லக்ஷணம்' என்னும் சுவடியில் இது நந்திகேசுவரரால் இசைக்கப்பட்டது, என்றும் ஆதலின் இதை இசைக்கும் மன்னர் நந்திகேசுவரருக்குச் சிறப்பு வழபாடு செய்ய வேண்டும் என்றும் கூறுகிறது.<sup>10</sup>

திருத்துறைப்பூண்டி ஒளஷத்புரிஸ்வரர் கோயிலில் உள்ள குடமுழாவில் 'ஸ்வஸ்தி' ஸ்ரீ இக்குடவிழா சமைப்பித்திட்டார் சிகாருடையார் மல்லாண்டரான சோழ கோனார்' என பொறிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது. சிகார் என்னும் ஊரைச் சேர்ந்த மல்லாண்டார் எனும் சோழ கோனார் என்பவர் இதைச் செய்தளித்தார் என அறிகிறோம். இதன் எடை 2330 பலம் எனவும் அதன் மேலே பொறிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது.<sup>11</sup>

பொறிக்கப்பட்டுள்ள எழுத்துக்களின் வடிவமைப்பைக் கொண்டு இவ்வாத்தியம் கி.பி. 13-ஆம் நூற்றாண்டைச் சேர்ந்ததாகக் கருதப்

இவ்வாத்தியத்திற்கு ஐந்து முகங்கள் உண்டு. ஒவ்வொரு முகத்திற்கும் கருணைக் கடலான சதாசிவ மூர்த்தியின் ஐந்து முகங்களின் பெயரைப் பொருத்திக் கூறுவதுண்டு. சிவபெருமானின் சதாசிவ மூர்த்தத்திற்குச் சத்தியோகாதம், வாமதேவம், அகோரம், நத்புருஷம், ஈசானம் என்று ஐந்து முகங்கள் உண்டு. சக்தியோகாத முகத்தினால் சிருஷ்டியையும், வாமதேவ முகத்தினால் ஸ்திதியையும், அகோர முகத்தினால் தியேபவச் செயலையும், ஈசான முகத்தினால் அனுக்கிரகத்தையும் சிவபெருமான் செய்கிறார் என ஆகமங்கள் கூறுகின்றன. இந்த ஐஞ்செயலையும் குறிக்கும் ஐந்து முகங்களையும் பஞ்சமுக வாத்தியத்தில் பொருத்திக் கூறுவதுண்டு. இவ்வாறு இறைவனையே இசை வடிவாகப் போற்றி நின்றனர் பண்டைத்தமிழ் மக்கள்.

**வீணை:-**

சிவபெருமானுக்கு விருப்பமான இசைக்கருவி வீணை எனத் தமிழ் நூல்கள் கூறுகின்றன. வீணையை ஏந்தியுள்ள இறைவனை

‘இசை வீணை உடையார்’  
‘ஒலி மல்கு வீணையர்’  
‘கொடு கொட்டியோர் வீணை உடையவனே’

என்றெல்லாம் போற்றுகின்றனர்.

சிவன் தட்சிணாமூர்த்தியாக இருக்கும்பொழுது தும்புருநாதர், சுகர் முதலிய முனிவர்கள் இசையுடன் சாமவேதத்தை வீணையில் வாசித்துத் தங்களுக்கு அருள் செய்ய வேண்டுமென்று இறைவனை வேண்டினர். அப்பொழுது அவர் வீணாதர தட்சிணாமூர்த்தியாக இருந்து வீணை வாசிக்கிறார். இத்தகைய நிலையில் சிற்பங்களாகவும், செப்புத்திருமேனிகளாகவும் கோயில்களிலே காணலாம். காஞ்சி புரம் கைலாசநாதர் கோயிலில் பார்வதி தேவி வீணையைத் தாங்கி நிற்கும் நிலையில் சிற்பம் உள்ளது. பல்லவர் காலம் முதல் நாயக்க மன்னர் காலம் வரையிலான சிற்பங்களில் வீணையைக் காணும் பொழுது அதன் வடிவமைப்பிலே உள்ள மாறுதல்களை அறிய முடிகிறது. சிதம்பரம் கோயிலிலே சிவகாமி அம்மையின் சந்நிதிப் பிரகாரத்தில் கீழ்ப் பகுதியில் உள்ள சிற்பங்களில் பாம்பு வடிவ வீணை ஒன்றினைக் காணலாம். இது ஒரு அரிய வடிவமாகும். குடத்தை இராமசாமிக் கோயிலில் கருவறையில் இராமர், லட்சுமணர், சீதை முன்பு ஒரு கையில் சுவடி ஏந்தி, மற்றொரு கையில் வீணை ஏந்தி இராமன் புகழ் பாடும் அநுமனின் சிற்பத்தைக் காணலாம்.

பல கோயில்களில் வீணை வாசிக்கப்பட்டு வந்திருக்கிறது என்பதைக் கல்வெட்டுக்களால் அறிகிறோம். திண்டிவனம் கோயிலில் இறைவன் முன்பு வீணை வாசிக்கவும், உடன் பாடுவான் ஒருவனுக்கு மாக நிலம் தானமாக முதலாம் இராசராச சோழன் காலத்தில் வழங்கப் பட்டது.<sup>12</sup> மேலும் திருக்கடவூர், வேப்பத்தூர், திருந்து தேவன்குடி, தஞ்சாவூர் முதலிய கோயில்களில் வீணை வாசிக்கப்பட்டதாகக் கல்வெட்டுக்களின் மூலம் அறிகிறோம். இவ்வாறு வீணை வாசிப்பதற்காக வழங்கப்பட்ட நிலம் ‘வீணைக்காணி’ என அழைக்கப்பட்டது.<sup>13</sup> தஞ்சைப் பெரிய கோயிலிலே வீணை வாசித்தவன் பெயர் செம்பியன் வீணை ஆதித்தன் என்பதாகும்.

காரணம்:-

இந்த இசைக்கருவி நீண்ட குழல் போன்றும் ஒரு முனை வாய் அகன்றும் இருக்கும். இறைவன் வீதி உலாச் செல்லும்பொழுது இறைவன் வருவதை உணர்த்த ஊதக் கூடியதாகும். இதைப்பல மன்னர்கள் தங்கத்தினாலும், வெள்ளியாலும் செய்து வழங்கியுள்ளனர் என்பதைக் கல்வெட்டுக்களின் மூலம் அறிகிறோம்.



சொற்றமிழில் பாடுக என்று கூறினான் இறைவன் சுந்தரரிடம்; என்ன சொல்லிப்பாடுவேன் என வேண்டினார் சுந்தரர். பித்தன் என்றமையின் 'பித்தன் என்று பாடு' என்று அருளினார் இறைவன். பின்னர் 'பித்தா பிறைகுடி' எனத் துவங்கும் பாடலைப் பாடினார் சுந்தரர். இந் நிகழ்ச்சியை நினைவூட்டுகிறது ஒரு கல்வெட்டுச் செய்தி. உதயன் ஸ்ரீ கயிலாயமுடையான் என்பவன் 'பிச்சன் என்று பாடச் சொன்னான்' என அழைக்கப்பட்ட இரு காளங்களை வழங்கிய தாகக் கோப்பெருஞ்சிங்கனது திருவெண்ணைநல்லூர்க் கல்வெட்டு கூறுகிறது, சுந்தரர் இறைவனால் ஆட்கொள்ளப்பட்ட இடமான திருவெண்ணைநல்லூரிலிருந்து இது போன்ற ஒரு செய்தியை அறிவது எவ்வளவு மகிழ்ச்சியாக உள்ளது.<sup>14</sup>

முதலாம் இராஜராஜசோழனுக்குச் சிவபாத சேகரன் என்ற ஒரு சிறப்பு பெயர் உண்டு. தஞ்சைக் கோயிலுக்குத் தங்கத்திலான இரு காளங்களைத் தானமாக அளித்தான். அதில் ஒன்றில் 'சிவபாத சேகரன்' என்றும், மற்றொன்றில் 'ஸ்ரீ இராஜராஜன்' என்றும் பெயர் பொறித்திருந்தான். இறைவன் புகழை எப்பொழுதும் தான் கூறிக்கொண்டிருக்கும் வகையில் இவ்வாறு செய்தளித்த அம்மன்னின் பெருமையை எவ்வாறு போற்றுவது?<sup>15</sup>

நரலோக வீரனின் சிதம்பரம் பாடற் கல்வெட்டில் தங்கத்தினால் வேலைப்பாடு செய்யப்பட்ட காளம் ஒன்றை அளித்ததாகக் கூறுகிறது. இறைவன் வருகையைப்பற்றிக் கூறுவதற்காக அளிக்கப்பட்டது,

காளத்தின் ஒலியைக் கேட்டதுமே இந்திரன் கை இறைவனை வணங்குவதற்குத் தானாகவே தலைக்குமேலே தூக்கினான் என அப் பாடற் கல்வெட்டு தொடர்ந்து கூறுகிறது.<sup>16</sup> கோயிலில் ஸ்ரீ பலி நிகழ்ச்சியின் போது காளம் ஊதப்பட்டதாக முன்பே கண்டோம். மேலும் காளங்கள் ஊதப்படுவதற்காக தானம் அளிக்கப்பட்டதாக உடையார்குடி, திருவொற்றியூர்<sup>17</sup> (வெள்ளிக் காளம்) கீரனூர்<sup>17</sup> (நன்னிலும் வட்டம்) முதலிய கோயிற் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் கூறுகின்றன.<sup>18</sup>

சங்கு:-

ஆலய வழிபாட்டில் சங்கு வாத்தியமும் முக்கிய ிடம் பெற்றிருந்தது.

‘புள்ளும் சிலம்பினகாண் புள்ளரையன் கோயிலிலே  
வெள்ளை விளிச்சங்கின் பேரரவம் கேட்டிலையோ’  
‘செங்கல் பொடிக் கூரை வெண்பல் தவத்தவர்  
தங்கள் திருக்கோயில் சங்கிடுவான் போகின்றார்’

என திருப்பாவை குறிப்பிடுகிறது. வழிபாட்டின் போது சங்கு ஊது வோருக்கு நிலமும், நெல்லும் தானமாக அளிக்கப்பட்டதாக மேல் சேலூர், தஞ்சாவூர் திருமழபாடி, திருச்சோற்றுத்துறை, திருவாவடு துறை, கோனேரிராசபுரம் முதலிய கோயில் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் குறிப்பிடுகின்றன.<sup>20</sup>

தஞ்சைப் பெரிய கோயிலில் நிவந்தகாரர்களாக இருந்தவர்களில் முத்திரை சங்கு ஒன்று ஊதத் “தயிலன் விக்கியண்ணன்” என்பவரின் பெயரைக் குறிப்பிடுகிறது.<sup>21</sup>

இறைவன் ஆடும் பொழுது பூத கணங்கள் சங்கு ஒலிப்பதைச் சிற்பங்களில் காணலாம். இதை ஞானசம்பந்தர் பெருமான்

‘ஆடும் பறை சங்கொலி யோடழகாக’

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என இறைவனைப் போற்றுகின்றார்.

இவ்வாறு, தானமாக அளிக்கப்பட்ட சங்குகளின் மீதே எழுத்துக்கள் பொறிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளதைச் சில கோயில்களில் காணலாம். வேலூர் அருகில் உள்ள கழிஞ்சூர் சுவர்ணபுரீஸ்வரர் கோயிலிலிருந்து கிடைக்கப்பெற்ற சங்கில்

ஸ்ரீ கெஞ்சூர் இறையானீசுவர

உடையார்க்கு நகருடையான்

செய்ய கோவந் இட்ட சங்கு

எனப் பொறிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது,<sup>22</sup>

தஞ்சை மாவட்டத்தில் திருவிடைவாசல் கோயிலிலிருந்து எழுத்துக்கள் பொறிக்கப்பட்டுள்ள சங்குகள் இரண்டு சேகரிக்கப்பட்டன.

திருவதிகைக் கோயிலில் உள்ள சங்கில் ‘திருச்சிற்றம்பல உடையார்’ எனப் பொறிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது,<sup>23</sup> தொழுதூர் வரதராசப் பெருமாள் கோயிலில் உள்ள சங்கு சிற்றரசனான திருநீற்று வீர மகத சோழன் என்பவனால் அளிக்கப்பட்டதாக அக்கோயில் கல்வெட்டு கூறுகிறது.<sup>24</sup>

**சேகண்டிகை:-**

சேகண்டிகை என்ற வாத்தியத்தைப் பற்றி உடையார்குடி,<sup>25</sup> திருப்பாலப்பந்தல்,<sup>26</sup> அந்த நல்லூர்<sup>27</sup> முதலிய கோயிற் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் குறிப்பிடுகின்றன. ஸ்ரீ பலி நிகழ்ச்சியின்போது இது வாசிக்கப்பட்டதை முன்பே கண்டோம். இது உலோகத்தால் ஆனது. திருப்பாலப் பந்தல் கோயில் கல்வெட்டில் இருக்கருவியின் எடை 52 பலம் என குறிப்பிடப்பட்டுள்ளது.

மணி:-

கோயில்களில் பூசை நடைபெறுவதற்கு முக்கியமாக மணியைப் பயன்படுத்துவண்டு. பூசை நடைபெறுவதை அறிவிப்பதும் இதுவே. கண்டாமணி, கொத்துமணி, கைமணி எனப் பலவகையுண்டு. வைணவ ஆலயங்களுக்குச் சென்றால் வெள்ளியால் ஆன மணியைக் காணலாம். செங்கற்பட்டு மாவட்டத்தில் நெய்யாடிப் பாக்கம் என்ற கோயிலில் தேவியின் வழிபாட்டின்போது பயன்படுத்துவதற்காக ஒரு மணி, தானமாக வழங்கப்பட்டது என அக் கோயில் கல்வெட்டு கூறுகிறது.<sup>28</sup>

செண்டை:-

செண்டா என்ற தோற்கருவி கூம்பு வடிவமானது. சுமார் இரண்டு அடி நீளமுள்ளது. இது முகங்களும் தோலால் போர்த்தப்பட்டிருக்கும். ஒரு குறிப்பிட்ட பண்ணிசைக்கும் நிலையில் அமைக்கப்பட்டது. இக் கருவியை முழுத்தவோன் தன் முன் பக்கத்தில் தொங்கவிட்டுக் கொள்வான். நின்ற நிலையிலேயே வாசிக்கப்படும் கருவி இது. இரண்டு கைகளாலும் இரண்டு குச்சிகளை வைத்துக்கொண்டு அவற்றால் தாக்கி ஒலி எழுப்புவர்.<sup>29</sup>

திருப்பழனம் ஆபத்சகாயேசுவரர் கோயிலில் செண்டை என்னும் வாத்தியத்தை அடிப்பதற்கு ஐந்து பேர் நியமிக்கப்பட்டனர் என்றும். அவர்களுக்கு 30 கலன் நெல் ஊதியமாக வழங்கப்பட்டதாகவும் கல்வெட்டுச் செய்தி கூறுகிறது. 'திருப்பழனத்து மகாதேவர்க்கு செண்டை கொட்டுவான் ஐவர்க்கு முப்பதின் கலமாக' என்பது கல்வெட்டுத் தொடர்.

திருப்பறை:-

கோயில்களில் விழாக்கள் நடக்கவிருப்பதை அறிவிக்கப் பறை அடிக்கப்பட்டதை தஞ்சைப் பெரிய கோயில் கல்வெட்டு கூறுகிறது. செயங்கொண்ட சோழ குடிகைமாராயன் என்பவன் 40 காசுகள் ஊர்ச் சபையினரிடம் அளித்தான். அதிலிருந்து வரும் வருவாயைக் கொண்டு விழா நடப்பதை அறிவிக்க 10 பேர் திருப்பறை வாசிக்க நியமிக்கப்பட்டனர்.<sup>30</sup>

இதைத்தவிர கோயில்களில் ஊர்ச்சபை கூடுவதற்கு முன் பறை அடித்தல் வழக்கமாக இருந்து வந்ததைப் புள்ளமங்கைக் கோயில் கல்வெட்டு குறிப்பிடுகிறது.<sup>31</sup>

‘பறை யறைந்து திருவாலந்துறை முன்பில் வாசல்  
மாடத்தே கூடியிருந்து’  
என்பது கல்வெட்டாகும்,

**சிற்பங்கள்:-**

பாண்டியர் காலக் கலைக்கு எடுத்துக்காட்டாக விளங்கும் கழுகு மலை வெட்டுவான் கோயில் விமானத்தில் சிவபெருமான் தட்சிணாமூர்த்தியாக அமர்ந்திருக்கும் சிற்பம் காணப்படுகிறது. அதனால் அவர் வலது தொடையின் கீழே மிருதங்கம் போன்ற இசைக்கருவியை வைத்து அடிப்பதுபோல அச்சிற்பம் காணப்படுகிறது. இதை மிருதங்க தட்சிணாமூர்த்தி என அழைப்பர்.

மயிலாடுதுறை வட்டம் திருமங்கலம் என்ற ஊரில் விக்கிரம சோழசுவரம் கோயிலில் உள்ள மண்டபத்தூண்களில் சில உருவங்கள் காணப்படுகின்றன. அதன் மேற்பகுதியில் கல்வெட்டுக்களும் காணப்படுகின்றன. இவர்கள் இக்கோயிலுக்கு தானம் அளித்தவர்களாக இருக்கலாம். ஒரு சிற்பத்தில் ஒருவன் மத்தளம் ஒன்றை அடிப்பது போன்று காணப்படுகிறது. அவ்வுருவத்திற்கு மேலே 'மத்தள பெருமாள்' என கல்வெட்டு காணப்படுகிறது.<sup>32</sup>

**இசையைக் குறிக்கும் கல்வெட்டுக்கள்,.**

சில கோயில்களில் இசையைக் குறிக்கும் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் உள்ளன. புதுக்கோட்டை மாவட்டத்தைச் சேர்ந்த குடும்பியன்மலை சிகாநாதர் கோயில், திருமயம் ஆகிய இடங்களில் இசையைக் குறிக்கும் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் உள்ளன. அவை பல்லவ மன்னனான மகேந்திரவர்மனால் ஏற்படுத்தப்பட்டது. சதுரஸ்வரம், திஸ்ரம், கண்டம், சங்கீர்ணம் ஆகிய தாள வகைகளில் இறுதியாக உள்ள சங்கீர்ணம் என்னும் தாளத்தை ஒழுங்கு படுத்தினான். எனவே மகேந்திரவர்மன் இக்கல்வெட்டில் தன்னைச் சங்கீர்ண ஜாதி என்று சிறப்பாகக் கூறிக் கொள்கிறான். பலவித பண்களையும் தாளவகைகளையும் கூறி இறுதியில் இவை எட்டிற்கும் ஏழிற்கும் உரிய என முடிகிறது. கல்வெட்டின் மேற்பகுதியில் 'பர்வாதி' நீ எனப்பொறிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது. எனவே இவன் கண்டறிந்த பண்கள் 'பரிவாதி நீ' என்ற வீணைக்குப் பொருந்தும் என ஆராய்ச்சியாளர்கள் கருதுகின்றனர்.

மதுரை மீனாட்சியம்மன் கோயிலில் திருச்சுற்றில் உள்ள கூத்த பிரான் சந்நிதிக்கு எதிரில் உள்ள தூண் ஒன்றில் 35 வகையான தாளம் குறிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது. இதற்கு மேலே 'சப்தகுழாதி' எனப் பொறிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது.

**இசைத்தூண்கள், இசைக்கருவிகள்:-**

தமிழகத்தில் சில கோயில்களில் ஒரே தூணில் பல தூண்கள் செதுக்கப்பட்டுள்ளதைக் காணலாம். இவைகளைத் தட்டினால் இசை

யொலி எழும்பும் வகையில் அமைக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது. மதுரை, திருநெல்வேலி, ஆழ்வார் திருநகரி, கிருஷ்ணபுரம், செண்பகராம நல்லூர், தென்காசி சுசீந்திரம் ஆகிய கோயில்களில் இத்தகைய தூண்கள் காணப்படுகின்றன. ஆழ்வார் திருநகரி கோயிலிலும், குடந்தை கும்பேசுவரகவாமி கோயிலிலும் கல்லால் ஆன நாதசுரங்கள் இன்றும் உள்ளன.

மேற்கண்ட வரலாற்றுச் சான்றுகளைக் காணும் பொழுது இறை வழிபாட்டிற்கு முக்கியமான இசைக்கருவிகளை வாசிப்பதற்காக பல்வேறு வகைகளில் தானமளிக்கப்பட்டிருக்கின்ற உண்மையை அறிகிறோம். பல்வேறு காலச் சிற்பங்களில் காணப்படும் இசைக் கருவிகளைப்பற்றி ஆய்வு செய்தால் அதன் வடிவமைப்பிலே காணப்படும் மாற்றங்களை அறியலாம். இசைக்கலைக்குத் தமிழகத்தின் திருக்கோயில்கள் பெரும் பங்கு ஆற்றியிருக்கிறது என்றால் அது மிகையன்று.

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# **A Multi-Faceted study of Nataraja**

**K. C. Kamaliah**

Everywhere is the Holy Frame, everywhere is Siva Sakti,  
Everywhere is Chidambaram and everywhere is the Sacred Dance,  
Everywhere as Sivam pervades, it is a play for Sivan  
And He exists anywhere, everywhere and bestows His Grace.

The dancing stage is bliss, the songs are delightful,  
The many instruments and organs give tunes delightful.  
The movables and the motionless are in delight.  
It is delight to the Lord taking to the Dance of Delight.

In the universe far beyond rest the feet of Parasakti.  
In the universe far beyond fall the luminous rays of the Lord.  
Far beyond the universe spread the sound waves.  
In the universe far beyond the Sovereign Lord dances.

With the almighty dancing flickers the flame in palm.  
The matted locks float. When He dances devoid of calm,  
The crescent moon jumps. While dancing o'er the universe,  
He dances to rhythm the Dance of Rhythm.

The sky is the body, Muyalakan the dark cloud,  
The eight directions are the lovely hands of the Sage.  
With the three eyes as the three lights,  
The Lord dances as the mind as the stage.

— Tirumantiram of Tirumūlar

Global art has been enriched thanks to the appearance of Nataraja bronzes in the art museums of the world, the same previously unearthed and prior to that in worship in temples in the Tamil Country. Bulk of them are Chola bronzes, admired by artistes and connoisseurs of art, some of them bursting into poetic ecstasy. Their study has not been restricted exclusively to Nataraja bronzes, but opened new vistas for interpreting the Chola bronzes in general. Ananda Coomaraswamy interpreted the theme of Nataraja to the West, in a manner and style convincing, scientific and philosophical. Rene Grousset's is a fascinating pen-picture of the Dancing Lord.

Siva is now the embodiment of a powerful and Dionysian harmony - that of the Nataraja, the dread dance of the cosmic dance, the symbol of a superhuman poetic exaltation in which, as we have seen, India has expressed her heroic and almost Nietzschean acceptance of universal joy, pain and force. Whether he be surrounded or not by the flaming aureole of the tiruvasi (prabha mandala) - the circle of the world which he both fills and oversteps - the king of the dance is all rhythm and exaltation. The tambouring which he sounds with one of his right hands draws all creatures into this rhythmic motion; and they dance in his company. The conventionalized locks of flying hair and the blown scarfs tell the speed of this universal movement, which crystallizes matter and reduces it to powder in turn. One of his left hands holds the fire which animates and devours the worlds in this cosmic whirl.

One of the God's feet is crushing a Titan, for "this dance is danced upon the bodies of the dead," yet one of the right hands is making the gesture of re-assurance (abhaya mudra), so true it is that, seen from the cosmic point of view, and sub specie aeternitatis, the very cruelty of this universal determinism is kindly, as the generative principle of the future. And, indeed, on more than one of our bronzes the king of the dance wears a broad smile. He smiles at death and at life, at pain and at joy, alike, or rather, if we may be allowed so to express it, his smile is both death and life, both joy and pain, and this Nietzschean smile at universal suffering seems to us to possess very nearly the same aesthetic value as the misereor super turbas of the Christian and the Buddhist. From this lofty point of view, in fact, all things fall into their place, finding their explanation and logical compulsion. Here art is the faithful interpreter of the philosophical concept. The plastic beauty of rhythm is no more than the expression of an ideal rhythm. The very multiplicity of arms, puzzling it may seem at first sight, is subsequent in turn to an inward law, each pair remaining a model of elegance in itself, so that the whole being of the Nataraja thrills with a magnificent harmony in his terrible



joy. And as though to stress the point that the dance of the divine actor is indeed a sport ( lila ) the sport of life and death, the sport of creation and destruction, at once infinite and purposeless - the first of the left hands hangs limply from the arm in the careless gesture of gaja hasta (hand as the elephant's trunk). And lastly, as we look at the back view of the statue, are not the steadiness of these shoulders which uphold the world, as it were a symbol and the majesty of this Jove-like torso, as it were a symbol of the stability and immutability of substance, while the gyration of the legs in its dizzy speed should seem to symbolize the vortex of phenomena ?

## Arts

Arts are said to be sixty-fore in number; "aya kalaikal arupattu nanku" is an oft quoted saying. The most prominent of them are, Painting, Sculpture, Dance, Music and Poetry. Primitive man danced in ecstasy as an emotional outburst at times of peril and pleasure. Music came to occupy an integral part of dance later. The word kalai in Tamil and kalā in Sanskrit are the equivalents of the English word, Art. In Sangam Poetry, kalai connoted deer as well as its horns. It is also used to mean wide knowledge - paranta arivu. In the Silappadhikaram, kalai is used to mean body in the word kalaiyilan he without a body. Kalvi - education is derived from Kal meaning read. Karpu - chastity, kalai - art are also derived from kal. Kala in Sanskrit is derived from kal, which means spreading. Whatever be the origin of kalai in Tamil and kalā in Sanskrit, art may be taken to mean all that is beautiful, serene and elevating.

### High Degree of Excellence in Dance :

Nataraja is the Lord of music and dance, the latter inevitably supported by the former. During the early centuries of the Christian era, a high degree of excellence prevailed in the performance of dance. The dance debut of Māthavi choreographed in the Tamil Epic Silappadhikāram is worthy of note.

Māthavi of fair shoulders and handsome tresses, bedecked with flowers, was a damsel of heavenly lineage. She was not deficient in any of the three dance, song and natural beauty. She was given coaching for seven years, as to enable her to exhibit her maiden dance performance in the immediate presence of the king of the land at the age of twelve.

The dance master of Māthavi knew the intricacies of dancing. He could render effectively diverse poses of dancing suitably matching them with songs. He was immaculate in his knowledge of well defined codes of the eleven kinds of dances, songs and the supporting instruments. He knew too well the rules when dancing to self and dancing for others, singing and about the time beats and their divisions. While gesturing, he could discriminately use one hand - piṇḍi, or both hands - piṇḍaiyal, as also the hand of beauty - eḷirkai giving poses or the hand of action - toḷirkai. He avoided the mistake of hopelessly mixing the gesture of one hand with that of two and vice versa. While dancing for others, gestures must not accompany dance nor dance exhibited while showing gestures. He must avoid the confusion of mixing the movements of the feet meant for group dancing and individual dancing. Such was the dance master of Māthavi who expertised in dancing and made his pupils dance as taught by him.

The music teacher was well versed in song and music, to be in tune with yāl flute, time beats and vocal singing, mellowed taṇṇumai of low intensity and dance. He could adopt music to dance and was conversant with the classical modes in different tongues. With his versatility of various styles of diverse tongues, he could expound on music, dance and song, true to tradition.

The poet credited with the reputation of deep lore in Tamil and popular in the Tamil Country (Tamilakam - lit. The Home of Tamil) surrounded by the noisy sea, observed strictly the rules of theatrical art in its two forms. He swerved not from established modes, alive to the faults of style likely to be pointed out by rival critics. Avoiding such flaws, he was a bard soaked in the knowledge of works of merit.

The drummer, taṇṇumaiyōn - lit. He of Taṇṇumai, was familiar with the intricacies of all types of dances, songs, and musical notation, rhythm and beats and the likely shortcomings that might arise. He was thoroughly conversant as to when to play single beats and how to combine the same with double beats and knew how to cling on to some and drop a few. The rhythmic patterns created out of the drum beats merged with the notes of the yāl (the lute) and the kuḷal (flute) and the vocal songs, pleasing to the listeners. He had full control over his drum allowing the other instruments to be audible. He knew when and where to fill in the gaps and when to go all out to drown the other instruments by the overpowering drum beats, without discordant notes from his drum, contrary to musical tradition.

Then there was the flutist playing on it with impeccable purity, swerving not from the usual pattern. He knew the rules of diction to his finger tips, could create tuneful melodies on rhythmic syllables. He accompanied the singer elaborating what was sung and keeping within limits toeing the singer. Each note played by him could be easily distinguished from the rest revealing his grasp of melodies.

The Yāl maestro played on the fourteen stringed instrument. With a view to produce the seven pālai notes, he would sound the respective strings and bring out the strong note of tāram and the tender note of kural, kaikkilai from the central part of the instrument and then viḷari. Then starting with uaḷi and ending in kaikkiḷai, he would produce on the fourteen strings cempālai notes. Thereon would arise in order padumalaip-pālai from kaikkiḷai, cevvaḷippalai from tuttam, kōdippalai from tāram viḷarippālai from viḷari, mērcempālai from iḷi. In contrast to the flute, the yāl sounds lower and lower in pitch as the strings are traversed from right to left. The player on the yāl was an expert who judiciously mixed the strong and the tender notes with those of even ones with ease.

After the king and others occupied seats according to their ranks, the instrumentalists took their positions. Māthavi then ascended the stage, planting first her right leg on it and

proceeded straight to the pillar on the right of the stage to the audience. Close to the pillar on the left, the supporting singers - *tōriya makalir* - erstwhile dansuses of repute, who sang two invocation songs, at the end of either of which all instruments sounded in chorus. Those came in the following order. After the flute came the *yāl*, followed by the drums, first *taṇṇumai*, then *muḷavu* and *āmantirikai* there after. With two strokes for one beat, eleven such beats were executed conforming to tradition handed down by the preceding to the succeeding generations. This chorus called *antarkkuṭṭu* then faded away.

*Pālaippan* was then sung without any deviation. Closely followed the four parts of a song, deficient not in any way, beginning with three beats and ending in one. The first phase of the dance ended thus. *Māthavi* danced the two styles of dancing with five beats as if a creeper of gold come to life, closely following the rules as laid down in texts. Pleased with her performance the king presented her with a green leaf garland and 1,008 *kaḷaāncus* of gold.

*Māthavi's* dance performance has been summed up in a four line *veṇṇpā*.

The numbers and the letters,  
The branches five and the melodies four,  
The rhythmic dances eleven -  
To the ends of the world she took.  
Coming on to the dance theatre,  
Displayed her skill by word of mouth too,  
*Māthavi*, the beauty of famed *Pukār*,  
With bangles of gold.  
[ *eṇṇum eḷuttum iyalaintum paṇṇānkum*  
*paṇṇinṇa kūttu-p-patinonṇum - maṇṇinmēl*  
*pōkkināl pūmpukar-p-poṇṇodīmātavitan*  
*vākkināl ādarankin vantu* ]

### **Nataraja Images in the South**

The one deity that can be easily identified by the common man in South India is that of *Nataraja*. In all Siva temples

in a niche facing south. Nataraja may be seen installed there. The Dancing Lord has been sculptured in stone and metal running into many hundreds and painted too, only a few. Tamil Nadu abounds in Nataraja images in bronze and stone, with the entire South coming next. An exhaustive census of Nataraja images in stone and metal including bas reliefs, not to talk of those in mortar, is a stupendous task. But a sizable number has been taken note of by scholars including those in overseas museums and perhaps in private collection.

The familiar figure of Nataraja with four hands - the two upper ones holding the kettle drum-and the fire and the two lower ones-one in Fear Not sign and the other thrown across the chest as the trunk of an elephant, is seen predominantly. The left foot is lifted, there is a woman's ear ring on the left ear and the matted locks are flying. The Lord dons a crescent moon. The right foot crushes Muyalakan. Smile plays on the lips of Siva.

What can be the origin for the dancing deity captivating the imagination of the artist to visualize an image as that of Nataraja followed by later generations and more or less standardised in form, "The dancing of Civan especially in the golden Hall at Cithambaram is always interpreted in the same way as His sports. His dancing is symbolical of His perpetual and gracious action throughout the universe and in loving hearts. In fact, it takes us back to the manifestations of the preAryan-demon, or Bhairava, that dances in the burning grounds, smearing himself with the ashes of the dead, adorning himself with necklaces of their bones, and bearing away with him a skull as trophy. There are many composite elements in these very ancient histories; and it is but fair to allow those who yet regard them with reverence to give them any reasonable interpretation of which they may be considered susceptible." (G. U. Pope's Note on Tiruvācagam).

A study of Nataraja bronze or image cannot be divorced from literature. Some of the basic details forming part of the figure are discernible in Silappadhikāram describing a dance of Sivan.

With the anklet worn artistically on his handsome feet jingling,  
 The drum in his hand of red hue sounding shrill notes,  
 His reddish eyes dispensing a thousand graces,  
 His matted locks of red reaching the ends of the world,  
 Throbs not the leg ornament, moves not the wristlet,  
 Tinkles not the waist band, shake not the breasts,  
 Swings not the head jewel, loosen not the dressed tresses.  
 Of Umaiyaaval forming a part of him!  
 And the Lord dances his koṭṭi-c-cētam.  
 Tirunilai-c-cēvadi-c-cilampu vāy pulampavum  
 Paritaru cenkaiyiṟ padupaṟai ārppavum  
 Ceṇkaṇ āyiram tīru-k-kuṟippu aruḷavum  
 Ceṇcadaṇ cenṟu tīcai mukam alampavum  
 Pādakam pataiyātu cūdakam tuḷankātu  
 Mēkalai ādatu menmulai acaiyātu  
 Varkuḷai ādatu maṇikkulaḷ aviḷātu  
 Umaiyaaval orupuran āka ōnkiya  
 Imaiyaavan ādiya koṭṭi-c-cētam]

— Silappadhikāram, Nadukaṟkātai, (Lines 67-75)\*

What might have been a simple portrayal came to be embellished with further additions.

Dance as an art has been an integral part of the Saiva persuasion. Its heyday in the Tamil Country was during the rule of the imperial Cholas, although the Cheras and the Pandyas were also equally ardent devotees of the Dancing Lord. Dances were performed in the temples of Tirukkadvūr, Tirumayilādutuṟai and Tiruvucāttānam by danseuses bearing the title of Mānikkam-Ruby, as learnt from the inscriptions. The imperial Cholas, whose family deity was the Dancing Lord at Tillai, patronised and helped in the growth and development of dance and music. They drew their inspiration from the devotional hymns of the Nayanmars.

### Chidambaram

Chidambaram is the centre of the universe where the Lord of Dance executes His dance. And so Tirumūlar calls every place as Chidambaram as the venue of the Lord's dance.-  
 enkum citambaram enkum tirunaṭṭam. Chidambaram known to

the hymnists as Tillai came to be universally accepted as the place where the Lord dances in the Hall of Gold - Pon Ambalam. "Tillai, when Māṇikkavācakar lived, was to the devotees of Civan what Jerusalem was to the Jews of old," observes G.U. Pope. In his Decad, 'Mine Eyes Have Seen' the Sight of the Mystic Dance or the Unspeakable Vision - Kandapattu, Māṇikkavācakar in rhapsody sings of his experience in having a vision of the Dancing Lord at Tillai.

"His form I've seen in Tillai's temple Court, where all bow,  
down";

"Ambrosia pure, Him I've seen in Tillai, where the saints  
consort";

"I've seen Tillai that holds the Gem, which endless rapture  
yields";

"Have seen in Tillai's Fane Adorned, the sweet and blissful  
seat";

"The gleaming Light that rules, and ill destroys; the Emerald,  
Him have I seen in Tillai Bright, where Vedas worship  
and extol,"

In the Decad of Glorious Tillai or Kulā-p-pattu, Māṇikkavācakar is rapturous.

"I've reached Him Where He dances, Lord of Tillai's Home  
of Joy";

"I've reached Him Who bears rule in Tillai's Home of  
Heavenly Joy."

To Māṇikkavācakar and the world at large, the Lord is "Dancer in Tillai"- Tillaiyuṭ Kūṭṭan and His is "The Sacred Foot that danced in Tillai's city old" - Tillai mūtur ādiya tiruvadi.

To the devotees of Sivan, the term koyil-temple, denotes only the Chidambaram Temple where Nataraja dances. The dancing stage par excellence there is the Hall of Gold- Pon Ambalam. The Lord is eulogised as Pon Ambalavan- He of the Golden Theatre. Tiruvācagam describes him as the Lord "Who dwellest in the sacred golden porch, whose Being knows no end" - Ponāmbalattē mudiyā mutalē, Tirumantiram refers to the dance of the Lord as Pon Ambalakkūttu-Dance in the Hall of Gold.

Gods of the universe and those beyond.  
Gods on earth encircled by waves clear,  
Seeing the dance of the sacred Feet in the Hall of Gold,  
They worship and attain salvation.

(Andattil tēvarkaḷ appālai-t-tēvarkaḷ  
Tendirai cūḷ puvi-k-kuḷḷuḷḷa tēvarkaḷ  
Pundarika-p-pata-p-pon ambala-k-kūttu-k  
Kandu cēvittu-k-kati peṟuvārkarḷē)

In the Chidambaram Nataraja Temple, Pon Ambalam-Kanaka Sabha or the Hall Gold was erected by the Chola monarchs. The Kanaka Sabha and the Chit Sabha are together roofed with plates of copper, gilt with gold. Successive Chola rulers from Aditya I (A.D. 870-90) and the Pandyas have vied with each other in renewing the Kanaka Sabha with gold from time to time.

### **The Nataraja Theme**

For a proper and systematic study of the theme of Nataraja, it is profitable to limit it within specified periods. These may be clubbed together in a chunk from 600 to 1400 A.D. The Augustan Age of Tamil Literature i.e., the Sangam Age may be put down three centuries before and after Christ. Sangam Poetry dealt with war and love, nature and enjoyment. Yet, another channel was opened when devotional poetry held the field for five centuries after Christ between the sixth and the tenth century, and the saint poets of the Tamil Country the Nāyanmārs and Āḷvārs, poured out their hearts in hymns in praise of the Gods they worshipped. The Nāyanmārs were worshippers of Siva and their hymns were compiled by Nambiyāndār Nambi in the 11th century A.D. the compilation going by the name of the Twelve Tirumuṟais. Four of the saint-poets deserve special mention. They are Sambandar, Appar (Thirunāvukkarasar), Sundarar and Māṇikkavācakar, whose poems are considered divinely inspired. For every limb of Nataraja and conceivable thing he handles or wears, references can be traced in the canonical Saiva literature of the Nāyanmārs. Floating ideas handed down to posterity by way of mouth got crystallized in the form of hymns and a sizable



literature grew on Siva as the presiding deity of dance and music. The fillip given to the Nataraja theme by the hymnists was immense and the hymns seeped into the hearts of lovers of art and artisans. The period during which the imperial Cholas ruled (850-1200 A.D.) witnessed a bubbling religious fervour which was utilised by them in building massive temples of art. They were instrumental in getting cast a spate of Nataraja bronzes as objects of worship. This period has been very rightly called by the eminent historian, K. A. Nilakanta Sastri as "The Golden Age of Tamil Culture."

The lamp lit by the saint-poets continued to illumine the minds of the elite and the thread was taken up by the philosophers. Saiva Siddhānta got a systematic treatment at the hands of the philosophers in the fourteen works known by the name Meykanda Sāstram, during the period 1070-1238 A.D. The logical presentation of the philosophy of Saiva Siddhānta was accomplished by them and the foremost work was that of Meykaṇḍa Thēvar, the Sivañāna Bōdham of only 40 lines. It is a concise presentation of the Saiva Siddhānta system. Meykaṇḍār's work is taken to be a Tamil translation of a portion of the Raura Āgama, but this is contested by another section which claims that there are many internal evidences to prove that Meykaṇḍār's work was original. Though a study of Nataraja cannot be divorced from that of Saiva Siddhānta particular attention has to be bestowed in respect of Uṇmai Viḷakkam by Manavāsakam Kadantār.

Of the many names of Siva, Nataraja or the King of Dance is most widely known as also the sculptures of the Lord in stone and metal. Siva in his form as Nataraja dances in the cosmos and dances as well in the Golden Hall of Chidambaram, the centre of the universe. Siva exists in two states, one transcending everything and the other in inseparable relation. Siva in his highest form exists as pure intelligence and is devoid of form or svarūpa. He is devoid of qualities and attributes-nirguna. When Siva stands in inseparable relation to souls and the universe of matter, that state is known as saguna. Motion is then caused. There is no motion either for Pure Intelligence or Pure Matter. While Siva can exist both independently and in

inseparable relation with matter, the latter has no independent entity and can have motion only if Siva wills it. Betwixt Parasivam and Patisiva, i.e., Pure Intelligence and Nataraja, is Sivakāmi, the Spouse of the Lord, who is the connecting link. Sivakāmi is none else but Mother Nature. The form of Nataraja is but an exposition of the motion caused by Pure Intelligence when in contact with matter. In any Siva Temple in the South, no Nataraja deity can be seen in worship except in company with Sivakāmi, the Beloved of Siva, standing to his left.

A figure of Nataraja symbolises the mystic dance of Siva. That is also the epitome of the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy, the Philosophy of the End of Ends of the Saiva Faith. The Saiva Siddhanta postulates three entities, God (pati), the Soul (pasu) and Bondage (Pāsam) and they constitute a reality. The impure state of the soul is God's concern. The soul is covered by impurity mala known as ānava producing ignorance and detracting the soul. The remedy lies in knowledge or ñāna. The soul has the faculties of knowing, feeling and acting, which are the cognitive, emotive and conative abilities respectively. These can be made to function and to develop the power or sakti of God expressing itself as ñāna sakti or omniscience iccā sakti or love for the soul, and kriyā sakti or power to act. Redemption of the soul is carried out by the kriyā sakti of God taking five different forms in fulfilling the five acts of God. The saktis of sṛishti, sthithi and samhara respectively creates, preserves and destroys the world. The tirōbhava sakti conceals from the soul the true nature of the world to avoid temptations. The arul or anugraha sakti reveals the true nature of the world enabling the soul to withdraw from the world and turn to God. These are necessary for the soul to rise from its impure to its pure state. Its knowing power of ñāna sakti enables it to attain successfully knowledge of the world-pāsa ñāna, knowledge of the soul - pasu ñāna and ultimately knowledge of God-pati ñāna. These steps constitute the highest path to salvation. The soul, in its long journey of performing good and bad deeds and getting rewards and punishments respectively, learns to seek God instead of pursuing the world. With losing its ego and surrendering completely to God, its acts are those of Siva and it undergoes no more births. The soul then becomes a saved

being Jivanmukta. In its emergence from impure to pure state, it passes through different stages-avasthas. In the kēvala avastha, the light of the soul is hidden by ānava mala. In the sakala avastha, the soul joins a body and enters on its active career. In the suddha avastha, it gets full knowledge and becomes a redeemed soul and enjoys the bliss of fellowship with God.

### Nāṭyasāstra

The Nāṭyasāstra is a treatise on dance, indispensable for a study on the subject. It must have been a compiled work spanning a few centuries, not by one but by a number of authors. The work was available in two recensions in the 10th century. Abhinavaguptācharya (between the end of the 10th century and the beginning of the 11th century) used the shorter one for his commentary. Manmohan Ghosh says: "The Nāṭyasāstra is commonly attributed to Bharatamuni. But Bharata cannot be taken to be its author for in the Nāṭyasāstra itself his mythical character is very obvious and the majority of the Purāṇas are silent about the so-called author of the Nāṭyasāstra, and there is not a single legend about him in any of the extant Purāṇas or the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. The word Bharata which originally meant an actor seems to have given rise to an eponymous author of the Bharatasāstra or the Nāṭyasāstra (the manual of actors).

According to Nāṭyasāstra, Brahman prayed to Siva to tell the Gods about the use of angahāras, who directed Tandu to speak to Bharata. After inventing the Rēcakas, Angahāras and Piṇdis, Siva communicated them to the sage Tandu, who in his turn, made out of them dance together with songs and instrumental music. Hence this dance is known Tāṇḍava, i.e. Tandu's creation.

Siva's dance is also known nowadays as Sivatāṇḍavam, In a note Manmohan Ghosh observes: "Tandu's name does not seem to occur in any extant Purana. It is just possible the name of this muni has been derived from Tandava, a non-Aryan word which may have originally meant dance."

The Nāṭyasāstra says that Angahāras consist of karaṇas. The combined movement of hands and feet is called Karaṇa. Two

Karaṇas will make maṭṭka and two, three or four Maṭṭakas will make up one Angahāra. The term Rēcita (relating to a limb) means moving it round separately. The Nāṭyasāstra talks of the gestures of hands. Gestures of single hands (asamyutahasta) are twenty four in number and gestures of combined hands (samyutahasta) are thirteen in number. While Arumpatavuraiyācīriyar conforms to the same number regarding the gestures of single and combined hands, Adiyārkkunallar gives them as thirty three and fifteen respectively. In the Chidambaram Temple gates, the Karaṇas as given in Nāṭyasāstra are shown in bas relief in the supporting pillars of the gopuram. These are shown as executed by a danseuse. Over eighty of them are shown in relief as executed by the Lord of Dance himself in the inner prakāram of the Great Temple at Thanjāvūr. Dance is of two kinds, Tāṇḍavam and Lāsyam. They, in turn, are divided into Mārg and Dēsi. It is said that Tāṇḍavam is derived from the root thut, meaning stamping the earth with the foot. Tāṇḍu meaning jump is also likely.

Art lovers became conscious of the verses in Tirumular's Tirukkuttu-t-tarisanam—Vision of the Sacred Dance—thanks to the quotations in Ananda Coomaraswamy's Dance of Siva. In Tirumular's Tirumantiram of 3,000 verses, in nine divisions, about 800 verses deal either with the Sacred Dance or the Lord of Dance or the Chart relating to the Dance Theatre. There existed no systematic treatise prior to Tirumular, although there are references to the dances of the Lord in Silappadhikāram and the invocatory verses is Kalittokai.

#### Five Type of Dances :

The Lord's dances are categorised as five in the Vision of the Sacred Dance.

(1) Siva's Dance of Bliss-Sivānanda-k-kuttu. The theatre for the Dance of Bliss is none other than Sakti. While the Lord dances, the entire universe dances in unison with Him.

The vedas are chanted; the lofty agamas are followed;  
 The psalms are sung; the seven universes are moving;  
 The elements dance; the satellites all vibrate;  
 With the Lord dancing to rhythm the dance of delight and  
wisdom

- (2) Dance of Beauty-Sṇndara-k-kūttu. The Lord executes the Dance of Beauty before His Consort.

My Lord dances acts of vocation, dances His nine kinds;  
He dances in the crematorium and in the heart too;  
He dances where the three pulses meet;  
He concludes His dance recital, dancing in endless  
wisdom.

- (3) Dance of the Golden City—Poṟpati-k-kūttu. The Lord dances in the Lingam-the form and the formless.

The Dancer among the Gods, the foremost of dancers,  
The knightly Dancer in the lofty golden theatre,  
The Dancer among the souls, the Supreme Dancer—  
Him I seek with joy and worship with love.

- (4) Dance at Golden Thillai—His Nadanta Dance at Tillai is for all to behold.

He dances amidst the Gods and dances in the theatre too  
He dances with the gods of Trinity and a galaxy of sages  
He dances to the singing of sacred verses as also with  
Parasakti.

He dances in the hearts of the faithful, the King of Dance.

- (5) Dance of Wonder—Arputa-k-kūttu. Nataraja dances the Dance of Wonder with the cosmos as His theatre. This dance has to be viewed by the inner eye. The Lord who dances in other dances in the heart of the devotee, out of infinite mercy for the soul.

A Blaze of Light, the Guiding Light, the Inner Light—  
She of handsome eyes had a vision of Him such as these.  
with the sight of three Supreme Gods merging in Him,  
She broke into singing songs of His glory.

Kāraikkal Ammaiṃ on the Dancing Beauty :

Sundarar in his Tiruttoṇḍattokai calls Ammaiṃ by the name Pēyār and in two crisp words says that he is a slave of the one who has assumed the form of a ghost Pēyārkkum adiyēn. Ammaiṃ lived at a period in the sixth century A.D. when Buddhism and Jainism were extensively prevalent in the Tamil Country. She came prior to Sambanchar. Her contribution for the propagation and growth of Saivism was considerable and

she was like the Pole Star to the many devotees of Siva in the succeeding centuries. Of the hymnists, Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār in her scintillating hymns brings before our mind's eye the tribal dance of Siva whom she calls The Dancing Beauty-Ādum Aḷakan. Unmistakably she takes us to a very remote dim past when the Lord dressed as a maniac danced. Ammaiyār is the author of (1) Tiruvāḷankāṭṭu Mūṭta Tiruppatikankaḷ, (2) Tiru Iraṭṭai Manimālai and (3) Aṟputa-t-tiruvantāti, included in the Saiva Canonical literature-Eleventh Tirumurai. Ammaiyār's Mūṭta Tiruppatikankaḷ have won wide fame and approbation. In her rhythmic hymns, she sings of the Lord's dance in the cremation ground at Tiruvāḷankādu. She has dealt with Ūrttuva Tāndavam in several places and her songs help us to have some idea of this mode of dance.

Sacred Āḷankādu is the hallowed spot,  
Where our Father dances,  
With his thrown foot piercing the universe.

Sacred Āḷankādu is the hallowed spot,  
Where the Father dances,  
While the kaḷal and cilampu make jingling sounds,  
And the raised leg twists ransacking the universe,  
And the dance itself spits fire.

A passionate appreciation of the dance of the Lord at Tiruvāḷankādu may be noticed in the lyrics of Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār. What a jolly good time the demon troupe is having ! What a variety of ghosts! With bulging out convex eyes and sunken pit-like concave mouths, two protruding front teeth, and long and lean ankles, a female goblin has made the cremation ground at Āḷankādu as its permanent abode. There is no end to the hubbub which it is creating. In such a cremation ground, Nataraja dances with serenity, His matted locks flowing in the eight directions, thrilling the hearts of countless souls in the world.

Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār, who has painted a vivid picture of Ūrttuva Tāndavam, mentions also the Lord's Anti Niruttam-Twilight Dance.

While the muḷavu of Gods of yore sound without any flaw,  
The Lord who is the God of beauty  
Performs the Twilight Dance.

These lines of Ammaiyār are a pointer to the fact that at the time when Ammaiyar lived, there should have existed a clear cut definition of Anti Niruttam. Among the many holy names of Siva, Antivaṇṇan (Siva having the rosy colour of sunset) is one. Ammaiyār never for a moment forgets the Dancing Lord and in the 'Garland of Double Diamonds'—Tiru Iraṭṭaimaṇimālai, she sings :

With the ghost breaking into a song,  
And the extensive cremation ground  
Metamorphosed into a stage,  
Where the dance performance goes on,  
The demons worship the feet of the Lord, jingling with kaḷal  
And the Lord is all virtue behold.

A Nataraja image carries fire in the left upper hand, signifying him as Destroyer. The Lord who plays in the pyre fire carries fire in his hand too. Ammaiyār enquires of the Lord :

Is it because that Thou playest in the fire  
Thine hand has become reddish?  
Is it because of the inherent beauty of Thine hand  
Fire assumed the red hue?  
With the Kaḷal jingling  
And the dancing ghosts keeping company with Thee  
Thou glittering and carrying the Fire in thy hand  
Playest in fire.  
Sayest Thou how it is so.

The Lord dances with a plethora of musical instruments sounding as accompaniments.

Sacred Ālankādu is the hallowed spot  
Where our Father dances, amidst the singing of  
Tuttam, kaikkiḷai, viḷari, tāram,  
Surcharged with paṇ, and uḷai, iḷi, and ōcai.  
Amidst the playing on takuṇiccam, tuntupi, tāḷam, viṇai,  
Mattaḷam, karadikai, tamarukam of tender leather,  
kudamuḷa and montai  
Along with caccari, kokkarai and takkai,  
And all these intertwined into an orchestra.

That even the divine Consort of the Lord gets scared when the Lord dances in the cremation ground can be guessed from

what Ammaiyār describes in one of her songs perunkāṭṭin māyan āda malaiyān makaḷum marundu nōkkumē. Ammaiyār's vision and assessment of the Lord's dance reflects her devotion and attachment to the Lord as the Dancer.

"The underworld cracks at the planting of the Lord's feet  
below ;

The Sage's headgear pierces through the roof of the universe",  
sings Ammaiyār in one place.

De Zoete writes : "The poem of Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār, the patroness of Kāraikkāl, is an orgiastic celebration of Siva's graveyard dance which forcibly reminds one of the temples dedicated to black magic in Bāli. The holy women gloats over every macabre circumstance of corruption. No detail of horror is spared. Monkeys, vultures, demons, whirl in a vast orgy of dance to an insane deafening music. And, in their midst, the Supreme being, the immaculate dances among the emblems of corruption, his locks and the tiger skin, which girds him wildly flying, the crescent moon in his hair, the serpent encircling his waist. And the poetess, transformed into a she-devil, with flaming mouth and monstrous tusks, dances while she sings, dances the doom of sin." (De Zoete : Other Mind)

The information that can be culled from Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār's songs, are vital for a study of the Nataraja Theme. The dance in which the thighs separate-Ūrttuva Tāndavam and the Twilight Dance-Anti Niruttam find mentioned therein. A vivid portrayal of the Lord donning a number of items, as given by Ammaiyār can be seen in the sculptures of the Lord in stone and metal. The tradition of Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār spread to Combodia and Vietnam and her wish was that she must be always at the feet, of the Lord. The many representations of the Lord of Dance, with Karaikkal Ammaiyar taking part, confirm this.

### **The Dances the Lord executed**

The invocatory verses to Kalittokai, a Sangam work, mention three kinds of dances of Sivan-Kāpālikam, Kodukoṭṭi and Pānda-



rangam. While the Lord dances, His consort accompanies in Kāpālikam with the initial beat of Pāṇi, Pāṇdarangam with the penultimate beat of Tūkku and Kodukoṭṭi with the last beat of Cīr. Verses forming part of Sangam Poetry must have been later innovations, nevertheless anterior to later classics in Tamil. Silappadhikāram provides us with information relating to the two dances of the Lord, Kodukoṭṭi and Pāṇdarangam. From out of the scintillating lyrics of Kāraikkāl Ammaiyar, Antiyinmanatam also called by her we come across the lofty Twilight Dance Antiniruttam danced by the Lord in the cremation ground of Tiruvā-lankādu. By inference, another dance may be spotted in her songs repeatedly stressed by her-the dance in which one of the thrown out feet of the Lord pierces the universe-going by the name of Ūrttuvatāṇḍavam.

Tirumūlar, in his Vision of the Sacred Dance, specifically mentions only three-Kodukoṭṭi, Pāṇdarangam and Kōdu and also eight dances of the Lord without naming them.

The Monarch of the reputed forest of Tillai.  
 The heavenly tree with deep roots,  
 Seeks for dancing besides, Kodukoṭṭi, Pāṇdarangam and Kōdu  
 The dance of Destruction, the eight dances,  
 And also the five and six.  
 (Kodukoṭṭi pāṇdamkōdu sankāra  
 Nadameṭṭum aintāṟu nādiyul nādum  
 Tidamuṟṟeḷum tēvatāruvam tillai  
 Vadamuṟṟa māvana mannavan tānē)

#### **Pandarangam:**

After destroying the three cities, besmearing his body with the burnt ashes, the Lord dances.

Kodukoṭṭi ; Dance Terrible is the Dance of Destruction during the performance of which the Lord dances, clapping his hands joyously in victory.

Kodu :

The Lord dances with the skull of Brahma in his hand.

The five dances of the Lord, in pursuance of his five acts of creation, sustenance, destruction, illusion and grace and three more may go to make up the eight dances.

The dances are five. The Formless Dancer  
Taking a Form with the five vocations in view,  
Merciful in all his actions, carries on the five activities.

The Partner of the Damsel of the Honeyed Word, dances the  
Sacred Dance.

(Āna nadamaintu akaḷa cakaḷattar  
Āna nadamadi ainkarumattāka  
Āna toḷiḷaruḷāl aintolīr ceytē  
Tēn molī pākan tiru nandamādumē)

The theme of Nataraja must have gripped the minds of the  
people to such an extent that a number of Halls of Dance for the  
Lord came to be erected.

The Tiruppuṭṭūr Purāṇam catalogues the following dances of  
the Lord and the venues of the same :

|                  |   |                                   |
|------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Gauritāṇḍāvam    | } | The Chitsabha at Tiruppuṭṭūr      |
| Sandhyatāṇḍāvam  |   | The Rajatasabha at Madurai        |
| Samhāratāṇḍāvam  |   | At dead of night.                 |
| Tirupuratāṇḍāvam |   | The Chitrasabha at Tirukkuṟṟālam. |
| Ūrttuvatāṇḍāvam  |   | The Ratnasabha at Tiruvāḷankādu.  |
| Ānandatāṇḍāvam   |   | The Kanakasabha at Tillai.        |

### **The Saint Poets on the Lord of Dance**

The sacred utterances of the Samayakuravars - the saint  
poets, about the Dancing Lord are indispensable for a proper  
understanding. The same may be gone into in brief.

Sambandhar : The Lord's dances are Cokkam, pāṇḍarangam  
and Bhujangam. He dances to rhythm in the cremation ground  
He holds the fire in one of his hands. He dances to his  
spouse, who gives the beats. The sacred places of his dance  
are Tiruvatikai, Tiruvāḷavāy (Madurai) and kacci - ēkambam,  
Tiru-c-cenkāttangudi and Tillaiambalam. The five letters NA  
MA SI VA YA, truer than the four Vedas offer redemption to  
those chanting the same with devotion moved to tears.

Appar : The dancing stage for Sivan is Tillai - ambalam.  
What else would the mind seek after having a vision of the

Lord's Feet, his garment, stomach band, his smile and the third eye on the forehead, while he dances ?

Meditate with single minded devotion,  
No evil will befall on you.  
Worship the Lord who kicked Death,  
For the sake of the faithful.  
Go unto Tillai-ambalam,  
Where the Lord dances,  
Enquiring you with a gesture,  
"When did you come?"

(Oṟiyiruntu ninaiminkal untamakku ūnamillai  
Kaṇṇiya Kālanai-k-kālar kadintān adiyavar-k-kāc  
Ceṇṇu toḷumingaḷ tillaiyuṭ ciṇṇambalattu naṭṭam  
Eṇṇuvantān ennum tiru-k-kuṟippē)

Sundarar calls the Lord by the names, Kūttan-Dancer, Kūttudai-yān-He who takes to dancing, Nattam ādi and Naṭam-ādi He who executes dance. The Lord carries the attributes of drum, fire and black snake. He is accompanied in his dance by impz and goblins. He dances subjugating Kai's anger. His dances are : Bhujangam, Kodukoṭṭi and Pāṇḍarangam. The venues of his dance are Tillai-ambalam, Tiru-p-panaiyūr and Pērur (Melai-c-citambaram).

Manikkavācakar: Half of the sacred utterances of the saint in Tiruvācagam relate to Tillai.

The Lord dances 'mid the company of beauteous  
'Tiger-town' (Tillai)

That golden beauty like Himalaya wears,  
There to Umai whose roseate mouth is filled with  
sweetness,  
And to Kali grants the beauteous smile of His blest  
countenance,

Thus the Lord with his assembled saints  
Joyous hath entered 'Tiger-town' with garners filled,  
High Lord of Kailai that resounds with rapturous song.  
The saint praises the Lord as,  
Dancing in southern Tillai Court

This day to me precious ambrosia Thou, I praise.

( Ten Tillai manrinul ādi pōṟṟi  
Inṟenakku āramutu ānay pōṟṟi)

The two places where the Lord dances, according to Māṇikkavācakar, are Tillai and Tiru-k-kuṟṟalam. The Lord dances also at dead of night-naḷḷiruliḷ naṭṭam payinṟādum nātan.

Important are the verses of Cēramānperumāḷ, Paṭṭinattār and Cēkkiḷār, included in the Eleven Tirumuṟais.

There has been continuous saga of heartfelt outpourings down the centuries from the lips of saints, poets, musical luminaries on Tillaiul-kuttan who dances and will dance til. etrnity in the cosmos, beyond the universe and in the hearts of the faithful. Is he not the five elements represented in his dancing on earth in the Hall of Gold, by the drum the sound of which floats in the air, the fire in his hand, water on his head by the mermaid in the form of Ganga and his venue of dance also high up in the sky. The Tamil Siddhars, the philosophers, Kumaraguruparar, Tāyumanavar, Paranjōtimunivar, Sivagānamunivar, Kacciyaṇṇa Sivācāriar, Muttu-t-tāndavar, Tillai-vidangan Mārimuthu Piḷḷai, Sivaprakāsar, Gopalakrishna Bhāratil Mahāvidvan Minakshisundaram Piḷḷai and a few others may be cited for their contributions on the mystic dance of the Lord, How can anyone forget the mellifluous songs of Ramalinga Swamigal ? How his heart swells with emotion as can be tasted in one of his verses of choicest phrases !

Oh Thou Unalloyed Gold of Purest Variety !

Oh Thou Ruby emitting myriad rays of colour !

Oh Thou Hill of Virtue residing in the hearts of the faithful  
As the temple, who know not Death,

Oh Thou the Sweet Fruit of Cirrambalam,  
Who practises not alienation !

Oh Thou the Hospitable adored by the wisest in lore'.

Pleased Thou art with my eulogies I am ignorant  
to compose,

Oh Thou the One, the Supreme Teacher, **My** Jewel !

## Saivāgamas and the Dancing Lord

Tirnmūlar gives a list of the Āgamas as Kāraṇam, Kāmikam, Vīram, Cintam, Vātuḷam, Kālōttaram, Cuppiram and Makuṭam.

Peṇṇanal āgamam kāraṇam kāmikam  
Uṇṇanal vīram vuyar cintam, vātuḷam  
Maṇṇa-v-viyāmaḷam ākum kālōttaram  
Tuṇṇanal cuppiram collum makuṭam.

Āgamas are considered as important as the Vedas in Saiva theology. Reference to the Āgamas is relevant for a study of Siva's dance [though the Sanskrit jacket they wear is a borrowed one according to a school of thought.] Sivan is worshipped in form-cum-formless state. While having a form, he is worshipped as Sādasivan. As a dancing lord, he takes the form of Ūrttuva-tāndavar, according to Makuṭāgaman. Sukshuuma Panchaksharam, i.e., what the mind's eye sees the live letters of NA MA SI VA YA, is but the form of the Dancing Lord. Sivan is described as Kālaha-ramūrti. He destroys the God of Death. In that form, the Lord holds a trident in his right hand and tramples Death below, as described by Cuppirabhēdāgamam. Silparatnam gives a detailed description of the Lord who dances trampling Death. The Lord destroyed the three cities of the Titans. That act is described as Tripurasamhāram. With Gauri on the left and Murukan with folded hands on the right, the Lord has the attributes of drum, vajram, trident, noose, chisel, mace, serpent besides the Fear Not hand on the right and fire, book, the hand of boon, kētu, kēdagam, bell, and skull cap with one hand hanging down, as described in Kāmikāgamam. Silparatnam furnishes eight kinds of Tripurānta kamūrti, of which five are shown with four hands in each, one with eight and two with ten hands in each, every one of them differing from the other in some respects or other.

## Kōyil Purāṇam

The Kōyil Purāṇam of Umāpati Sivācāriyar (13th-14th Century A.D.) one of the exponents of the Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy, gives an exhaustive account culminating in the Lord's dance at Tillai. Tirumāl, i.e., Vishnu told Ādisēshan, his serpent couch, that he would go to Tārūkāvanam assuming the form of Mohini and accompany Sivan as his spouse,

begging for alms. When the begging Lord went Tārūkāvanam with Mohini by his side, the Rishis were thrown out of gear on seeing Mohini and at the same time witnessed their wives losing their balance of mind and reserve, at the sight of the begging Lord, a beauty incarnate. They grew furious and raised a sacrificial fire, out of which sprang a ferocious tiger, they despatched to destroy Sivan. He flayed it and wore as garment its skin. Then came monsters, whom the Lord used as his retinue. A huge snake followed and the Lord put it on as his wristlet. A malignant dwarf-Muyalakan, came thereafter, whom the Lord trampled and broke his back planting his foot on him. When the Lord revealed his usual form, the Rishis atoned for their sins and rid of their ego, began worshipping the Lord. Pleased, the Lord danced the Dance of Delight witnessed by his spouse and Tirumāl. On hearing the account, Ādisēshan prayed to Tirumāl that he yearned to have a vision of the sacred dance. With Tirumāl permitting, Ādisēshan began doing penance invoking Sivan to grant his prayer. The Lord appeared before him and directed him to go over to Tillai, the centre of the universe. Long before Adiseshan's arrival an ardent devotee of Sivan had already settled at Tillai assuming the form of Tiger Foot-Vyāgrapādar. The Lord had granted his prayer so as to enable him to climb up the tree even in darkness to gather fresh untouched flowers for worship. Adiseshan assumed the form with the body as that of a serpent and human face. Granting his prayer, to the delight of Patañjali and Vyāgrapādar, the Lord began dancing the Dance of Bliss, which to this day he is continuing at Tillai.

Though chronologically, Kōyil Purāṇam appeared later than the sacred utterances of the Nayanmars, its importance as a battle waged by non-believers must not go unnoticed. Dakshan's sacrifice belittling the importance of Sivan belongs to this category.

### **Ananda K. Coomaraswamy DANCE OF SIVA**

It was given to Ananda Coomaraswamy to awaken the world from slumber to comprehend the theme of Nataraja and

thereby introducing the Nataraja Bronze to the West. Certain writings become world classics overnight and one was the DANCE OF SIVA, AN ESSAY PUBLISHED FROM New York in 1918. It may not be an exaggeration to say that this essay is still in the forefront in spite of a valuminous literature that has grown round the Lord of Dance both in India and abroad.

The DANCE OF SIVA opens with a quotation from the Tiruvācagam;

“The Lord of Tillai’s Court a mystic dance performs,  
What is that, my dear?”

The question is answered. The dance, in fact, represents the Lord’s five activities. Siva’s dance was present in the minds of those first dancing in frantic and perhaps intoxicated energy of the pre-Aryan hill-god, afterwards merged in Siva. Whatever the origin of Siva’s dance, it became in time the clearest image of the activity of God. Ananda Coomaraswamy speaks of three dances of Siva. The evening dance, the Tāndava dance and the Nādānta, in Golden Hall of Chidambaram or Tillai.

Coomaraswamy draws a pen-picture of the South Indian copper images of Nataraja as typically represented being the motif of the dance of Siva in Chidambaram. With the assistance of a copious literature, he dives deep into the interpretation of the Nādānta dance. Our Lord is the Dancer, who like the heat latent in firewood, diffuses His power in mind and matter, and makes them dance in their turn.” Cosmic activity is the central motif of the dance. He quotes Chidambara Mummaṇikkōvai. A diligent philosophic study follows supported by extensive quotations from Tirumūlar’s Tirumantiram and other Saiva literature. The Lord dances in our body as the congregation. Siva bears the name of Sudalaiyādi, Dancer of the burning ground. He is a destroyer. What does he destroy? Where then is the burning ground? That is the crematorium where the ego is destroyed signifying the state where illusion and deeds are burnt away.

Coomaraswamy refers to the Mother-aspect of God quoting a Bengali hymn eulogising Kālī, the Dark One dancing her eternal dance in the burning ground. He also spots the spontaneity of Siva's dance clearly expressed in Skyrabin's Poem of Ecstasy.

Ananda Coomaraswamy summarizes the whole interpretation of the dance thus ; "The Essential significance of Siva's Dance is threefold : First, it is the image of his Rhythmic Play as the Source of all Movement within the Cosmos, which is Represented by the Arch : Secondly, the Purpose of his Dance is to Release the Countless souls from the Snare of illusion : Thirdly the place of the Dance, Chidambaram, the Centre of the Universe, is within the heart."

From philosophic heights, Ananda Coomaraswamy comes down to aesthetic plains. He calls attention to the grandeur of the conception of the Nataraja image as a synthesis of science, religion and art. He marvels at the range of thought of these artists, who conceived such a type as this, affording an image of reality, a key to the complex tissue of life, a theory of nature not merely satisfactory to the thinkers of one century only, but universal in its appeal to the philosopher, the lover and the artist of all ages and all countries.

We hear Coomaraswamy talking about reconciling Time with Eternity and the significance in the phase alternation implied by the drum and the purificatus non consumptous fire, visual symbols "Inert Nature cannot dance till Siva wills it. Rising from His rapture, He sends through inert matter pulsing waves of awakening sound, and lo. matter also dances. In the fullness of time, still dancing, he destroys all forms and name by fire and gives new rest. This is poetry ; but nonetheless science. The figure of Nataraja has commanded the adoration of many generations past : familiar with all scepticisms. expert in tracing all beliefs to primitive superstitions, explorers of the infinitely great and infinitely small, we are worshippers of Nataraja still," concludes Ananda Coomaraswamy his classic.



Though the brief study here is restricted to the, essay, *The Dance of Siva*, Romain Rolland in a foreword to the book of essays entitled the same, observes that "the purpose of Coomaraswamy's book is to show the power of the soul, to show all the riches that it holds stored up, with which to ennoble and render happy the human race. The whole vast soul of India proclaims from end to end of its crowded and well-ordered edifice domination of a sovereign synthesis. All the forces of life are grouped like a forest, whose thousand waving arms are led by Nataraja, the master of the Dance."

In short, Ananda Coomaraswamy's *DANCE OF SIVA* :

- (1) Is studied as a piece of literature all over the world ;
- (2) Stimulated a global interest in the Nataraja Theme, with a sizable literature since produced, as a sequel ;
- (3) Gave a fillip to a depth-in-study of South Indian bronzes, particularly the Chola bronzes, becoming favourites among connoisseurs of art for acquisition ; and
- (4) Induced scholars to look at close quarters the Southern Schools of Saivism, particularly the Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy.

### **The contribution of the South**

Siva worship, except in certain pockets in the north, especially Varanasi, Rajasthan and the Himalayan terrain, is not so dominant as those of the incarnations of Vishnu as Rama and Krishna. In the South, it is widely prevalent, although there are temples dedicated to Tirumāl and Rama and Krishna. Of the many manifestations of Sivan, Nataraja is known to the hymnists as Kūttan-the Dancer. Images of Nataraja or the Lord of Dance, in the north may be counted in one's fingers which cannot stand comparison to the marvellous creations in worship in the south running to thousands in metal and stone.

T. A. Gopinatha Rao mentions about a figure of Siva represented as dancing in a vigorous manner, remarkable for its vigorous action belonging to the rock temples at Ellora. He also writes about the reproduction of a very well executed piece of sculpture

of Siva to be found in the lower cave at Badami illustrated in a manner the dance called chaturam.

What might have originated as a trickle in the Tamil Country of the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas, can be seen in almost all Siva temples in the Kerala, Andhra and Karnataka States. And everywhere, it is the Lord of Chidambaram who is worshipped. The voluminous literature in Tamil provided food for thought to the artists to evolve a Dancing Sivan-Nataraja image in the Ananda Tandavam posture. The Chola hegemony in the South and the matrimonial alliances of the Chola rulers with the Pandyas and Cheras and the Chalukyas, might have given a fillip to the worship of Nataraja manifestation of Siva. The Telugu Cholas must have been instrumental for popularising their family deity on the mother's side, the Lord of Chidambaram. The Vijayanagar rulers in spite of their deep adherence to the worship of Vishnu, did not lag behind in the worship of Siva too. In almost every Siva temple in the South, Nataraja or the Lord of Dance installed in a niche can be perceived.

It is a play for the Lord to punish the wicked. He dances in ecstasy while engaged in destroying them. When the Rishis despatched a wild elephant on the Lord in Tarukavanam, he flayed it, covering his body with its skin and danced on its head. A wonderful representation of Gajasamharamurti may be seen in the Chidambaram Nataraja temple. Gajasamharamurti is portrayed with four or eight hands. In Tiruttaruppundi Bhava audiswarar Temple, Tiruccenkattangudi Rudrapatiswarar Temple and the Perur Siva Temple, fine specimen of Gajasamharamurti, sculpture in stone, may be seen. A feast for the eyes awaits one in the eight-handed Gajasamharamurti bronze in Valuvur Temple, depicting the heroic feat of the Lord.

Translation of the conception of Nataraja into sculptures was not an overnight phenomenon. It was the consummation of the fusion of dancing, painting and sculpture, drawing inspiration from hymns of intense piety and devotion. The rich contemporaneous literature not only sustained the dancer, the painter and the sculptor in their work of absorbing and everlasting interest, but kindled in them an energy and enthusiasm, to give a shape to what was

hovering before their mind's eye. The artists were not only past-masters in their profession, but also combined in them thinking and philosophy, with an imagination of wide sweep. While on the one hand the artist was translating his dream into plastic shape, the philosophers on the other produced a systematic treatise on the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy. But the artist was not to wait till the philosophers wrote their elaborate treatises. He was already conversant with Siva in his aspect of Nataraja and was no stranger to the hymns which contained in them all that he required to know about Siva. Concrete ideas of Saiva Siddhanta were already there in the hymns of the Nayanmars, though not in one place. Siva as the mystic dancer everybody knew. That he danced in Tillai or Chidambaram was not new. The captivating smile of Nataraja and the sublime serenity of the face, expressive of divine bliss, were already the theme of hymns which moved the faithful to their marrows. A remarkable hymn of appar runs:

Brows bent and bubbling smile playing in reddy juicy lips,  
 The cool braids and milky ash smeared over the body of  
coral hue,  
 The sweet raised golden foot, if one were blessed to view,  
 Birth as a man should be sought after in this vast earth.

#### Ūrttuvatāndavar

A few of the images of the Dancing Lord may be examined. Ūrttuvatāndavar subdued the fierce Kali, standing on one foot and lifting the other right upto his chin. The Tiruvācagam explains the reason for executing the dance.

Had not the lord of Tillai danced, the entire world would have been devoured by Kali with flesh-stained spear.

Stone sculptures of Ūrttuvatāndavar can be seen in the Kāśivisvanāthar Temple at Tenkāsi. The two are said to be Ūrttuvatāndavar and Mahātāndavar. Facing the Ūrttuvatāndavar, in the pillar opposite, is Kālī sculptured monolithic. Of life size, the Lord has raised his right leg right upto his face. Ten hands can be seen, five on either side. The Lord carries the usual drum and fire besides his flag of Nandi. The drum

he holds in his right upper hand is shown in such a manner that it can be put to use at any time. He stands on groaning Muyalakan whose body is slightly twisted with a serpent just beneath his hand. Vishnu on the right is shown in the role of a drummer with the Brahma on the left playing on cymbals. Has the Lord forgot himself in this wild dance? Beautiful garlands dangle going round the neck and touching below the thighs.

The other Ūrttuvatāndavar is sixteen-armed. This sculpture is not as slim as the one referred to above. The Lord looks aggressive with his trident planted near the foot of Muyalakan. He carries the attributes of Nandi flag, shield, bell, fire trident, arrow, noose, sword, scull-cap, drum, goad. He smiles the smile of destruction. The rightleg is raised in what is said as Lalāṭatilaka mode.

The two Ūrttuvatāndavar sculptures present a sharp study of contrast. Even the Fear Not hand of Mahatandavar is a bit straight mirroring the grimness of the Lord. Patanjali and Vyāgrapādar are worshipping the Lord with their palms joined in worship on either side. With his ankles and kneecaps exquisitely carved, we witness a war Lord dancing in Mahā-tāndavar. He holds the drum nonchalantly between two fingers. The two sculptures are handsome specimens and must be preserved with care.

Ūrttuvatāndavar sculptures in stone can be seen in Madurai and Pērūr temples.

Ūrttuvatandavar in bronze is in worship in the Siva temple at Tiruvālankadu. As in other Urttuvatandavar representations, the raised foot does not go up, but like Trivikramamurti it is thrown in front.

The perfect model of Ananda Tandava Nataraja

The Chola kings were patrons and connoisseurs of art and though during the reign of the earlier kings, Vijayālaya and Āditya I, perfection was not attained in what is known

as the Ānanda Tandavam pose. Nataraja from Nallūr in Tañjavur District had come very close to the perfect pieces of rhythm, poise and majesty later attained during the reign of Parāntaka I (907-955 A. D.) and his great grandson Rajarāja I (985 to 1014 A. D.). Parantaka I celebrated his victory over the Pandyan king by covering the Nritta Sabha in Chidambaram of his family deity Nataraja with tiles of gold. He also erected a temple dedicated to Siva at Thiruvallivaram in the Tirunelveli District in the Pandya country. In the vimāna of this temple, there is a four-armed Nataraja dancing on **Muyalakan** with all the characteristics found in an Ānanda Tandava Nataraja minus the Tiruvasi with which we are familiar. The artisan belonged to the Pandya country and this became the model to the Natarajas produced subsequently. Though the anonymity of the artisan cannot be pierced, he should have been a person of erudite learning, amazing skill and deep devotion. What was visualised and sculptured in stone by an unknown artisan, during the reign of Parantaka I, attained perfection, thanks to repeated attempts in painting and cast in metal at the time of his grandson, Rajaraja I (P. R. Srinivasan: The Nataraja Theme in Chola and subsequent period).

The view of Srinivasan is contested by Douglas Barrett. The former "uses as evidence a stone sculpture of Nataraja on the south side of the garbagriha in the Vālīsvara temple at Tiruvālīsvaram. Now the earliest inscriptions of the temple are those of Rajaraja I and it is to his reign that on stylistic grounds of the temple should be ascribed. The earliest appearance of the Nataraja as part of the main iconographic scheme on the walls of the temple is at the Umamaheswara temple at Konērīrājapuram to be dated between 969 to 976 A. D. Thereafter it is always present where the full ardhamandapa scheme is employed and is always in the Anandatandava mode."

**Tēnmeḷukku muṟai:**

Bronzes of deities are warped by what is called *cire perdue* process, known in Tamil as Tēnmeḷukku muṟai. It

goes without saying that the same is adopted for making Nataraja deities. This process has been in vogue since the period of the imperial Cholas. A mould in wax of the deity proposed to be cast is at first prepared over of surface of which a well-ground paste of anthill earth, charred husk, small bits of cotton and salt is uniformly applied. This may be followed thrice once in two days, allowing sufficient time for the same to dry. In the last coat, ant-hill earth must be used in abundance. Holes have to be made in the mould in the middle, top and bottom. The mould must then be backed in fire draining the melted wax. The metals used are copper, gold, silver, brass and lead. If the deity is to be made of copper or brass. it must be eight times the weight of the mould, of silver twelve times and gold eighteen times. But normally copper ingredient is used more than the others in the case of what are known as bronze. The molten metal is poured into the hollow mould through the hole in the middle. That the hollow parts all have been filled with the molten metal can be inferred when the same overflows through the holes at the top and bottom. Fire must then be put out and the mould allowed to cool, to get back to normal atmospheric temperature. The backed clay is then removed and the deity or figure as done in the wax model is obtained. The artist using his chisel treats the figure here and there so as to reflect fully what all he made in his wax model.

This process continues to be practised till this day in Swamimalai and some other parts in Tamilnadu by Kammāḷars, who call themselves Viswabrahmins - Brahmins of the universe, after Viswakarma, the heavenly architect of Hindu mythology.

Kuram Nataraja :

The Nataraja bronze from Kuram housed at present in the Madras Museum is a Pallava piece assigned to the 9th Century A.D. It is contained in a Tiruvāsi. It is conspicuous by the absence of fire in the left hand, but instead holds a servant, the front portion of which must have broken. The right foot crushes Mūyalakan and the left foot is raised as if some undesirable object has come in the way, perhaps a serpent. Unlike in other bronzes of the Ananda Thandavam

mode, the left foot is not thrown across to the right. Though an earlier date has been assigned to the bronze, the ornamentation cannot fail to be noticed. The kēyuras and the wristlets, more properly called kāppus, the padasaram and the jewellery around the neck are prominently displayed. The dual nature of the Lord is reflected in the tōdu he wears in his left ear. The elaborately worked out head dress fixed with a flower-like rākkadi on the back side and the locks of hair falling on the back shoulders add to the beauty of the bronze. It is a bit difficult to explain for the ornamentation of the bronze consistent with its dating. Gangs is absent. Otherwise the basic requirements associated with the form of Nataraja are satisfied.

#### Okkur Nataraja :

For a study of the evolution of stristic pieces of Nataraja bronzes in Ananda Tandavam mode, Okkur Nataraja has to be necessarily taken into account. This bronze must have been a source of inspiration to later sculptors to improve and embellish. Scriptural requirements are amply satisfied in this piece. The Lord tramples Muyalakan on a lotus oval base. The lower right hand offers protection. The thrown-out left hand utariyakai is not as graceful as in other bronzes. The drum is firmly clutched by the right upper hand while the left holds the fire. The crescent moon is on the right side of the head. The Lord dances within the Tiruvasi representing the universe. It has 19 flames each with three tongues. The head dress, the two upper hands, the lifted foot and the stomach band touch the Tiruvasi, which is elongated and oval. This bronze must have inspired the later artists to make the Tiruvasi more circular and the torso twisted to reflect gyration in which case the hand thrown across would descend a bit lower. The face is fleshy, long not attractive. While one view of the bronze is that it is a simple and archaic type and crude, the other does not see lack of artistic ability in the Okkur sculptor, as his fashioning of the flames of the Tiruvasi the lotus petals of the pedestal and even the face of the Nataraja himself is superb. The bronze is without ornamentation. The absence of the Ganga in the bronze must be taken note of, a further evidence of the antiquity

of the piece. The matted locks of hair in four strands flying in wavy curves horizontally on either side touching the Tiruvasi are like ropes of coir. But for the splendor modelling of the limbs and the inartistic manner of the matted locks of hair and the chubby face, it would have looked more handsome.

#### Nataraja Bronze of Poise and Dignity :

The date assigned to the Velankanni bronze of Nataraja is the end of 10th century A. D. according to P. R. Srinivasan. C. Sivaramamurti assigns it to the 11th century A.D. From top to bottom, the height of the bronze is 112 cm. The breadth is 99 cm. From head to foot it measures 84 cm. The upper two hands are at 63.5 cm. from each other. From the middle point of the planted foot to the left and right upper hands, the measurement is 66 cm. The head - dress is compressed into a Makuta resembling the head - dress of the Tiruvarankulam Nataraja. Ganga does not find a place. The matted locks of hair flying on both sides of the head are refined, and lovelier than those found in the Kothangudi piece or the one from Kankoduttavanitam exhibited in the Madras Museum. The Tiruvasi within which the Lord dances is oval, but shrunken at the bottom. The lotus pedestal on which the Lord dances is oval and small, where Muralakan is being crushed. There are 29 flames in all in the Tiruvasi, 14 on either side with three tongues each and the top one with 5 tongues. The face is ovoid and tilted to the right. The upper two hands with the drum and the fire are far apart. In the hand of protection is coiled the cobra raising its hood erect, unlike in the Kankoduttavanitam and Kothankudi bronzes referred to above appearing to un-coil themselves. The gajahastam is thrown across the chest on the pattern seen in the Tiruvalankadu Nataraja. The planted and the lifted feet, the cloth flying from the stomach band, the upper garment and the shaping of the limbs all present a graceful appearance. This Nataraja is of surpassing beauty next only to that of the Tiruvalankadu Nataraja. W.S. Hadaway compared the two : "In comparing this example with that of Tiruvalankadu, one notices the difference in the gracefulness of the poise and the greater sturdiness in the limbs, somewhat to its detriment. There



is, in fact, if one may use the seeming paradox more convention but less art in this figure than in the Tiruvalankadu piece, though on actual measurement, the Tiruvalankadu figure is more nearly correct according to shastraic rules." C.Sivaramamurti says of this bronze: "The arrangement of the jatas of the Velankanni figure, the disdainful smile on the face, the ease in the hands of protection and the constrained and sculpturasque dangahasta approaching the elegantly raised foot proclaim it a great masterpiece."

### Art Lovers Come as Pilgrims:

The pride of place not only amongst the Nataraja bronzes of the Madras museum but also many others adorning the museums of the world and in worship in the temples of the Tamil country, goes to the Tiruvalankadu Nataraja, rightly so. Connaisseurs of art all over the world are in the know of it. "It is just over half life size. The almost spider like liveness and attention of the limbs gives it a very gay and graceful appearance, by no means so apparent in the other example (Velankanni) which is somewhat heavy by comparison."

The Tiruvalankadu Nataraja is a perfect piece of rhythm, with poise and dignity, charm and grace, sending a thrill in the hearts of those who are fortunate to have a sight of it. Ah, the smile of the Lord! Bubbling as in a fountain. The bronze is perfect in anatomical details and the proportion of the limbs. The Lord, who is beauty incarnate, stands on an oval base. In the planted foot, where the souls get respite and the lifted foot bestowing grace, can be seen the cilampu. He caused the sound of his tinkling anklets to be heard-pada-c-cilampoli kattiya panpu, as Tiruvacakam says. The grandeur of the Tiruvalankadu bronze is in its simplicity. The fear not hand offering protection and the hand thrown across the body are natural and handsome enabling the viewer to enjoy the dancing Lord's pose and the twist in the torso indicating the gyration, are a treat for the Gods. The flying portion of the stomach band is broken. The left upper hand holding the fire so beautifully balances the two legs and the three hands on one side that words cannot describe the grandeur. The drum is picturesquely held. The face is round.

The left ear has a *todu*. "The patta that goes round the head is the simplest of its kind. The speciality of this bronze becomes apparent in the manner in which its headdress is done." From end to end the height of the bronze is 117 cm. The two upper hands apart and the middle point of the planted foot go to make the three sides of an equilateral triangle, each side measuring 90 cm. The skull and the cobra on the headdress and the artistically placed crescent moon enhance the beauty of the bronze. No better words can be found than the poetic description of Auguste Rodin in mellifluous French.

\*Illustrations of Metal Work in Brass & Copper Mostly South Indian Edgar Thurston, ( Velayuda Asari and W. S. Hadaway )

"Quickened by the wind. the flow of existence, the air, the sun, life itself constantly overflows. For, such appears to us art in the East.

"The divine beauty of the human body was mastered in those ancient days not because man was then closer to his origin-our human forms have remained unchanged but because today's servitude believes that it has emancipated itself from everything and we are bewildered. The taste is absent.

"The shadow gradually works on the masterpiece, casting on us a spell of deep morbidness arising for that darkness where it had remained so long.

"These two hands separating the breasts from the belly are admirable. Indeed their gesture can compete in gracefulness and elegance with the gesture of Venus of Medici's protecting its charms with its arms while Siva seems to protect himself with this ingenious gesture.

"These legs with their lengthened muscle jealous in their obscure mystery : The background of shadow standing out all the more because of the light on the thighs.

"The posture is very commonly used by the artists ; but here it becomes unusual.

Nature is here, and yet it is so far away. There is above all what no one seems to have noticed : the mysterious depths,

the depth of life itself. There is elegance in the gracefulness and above this gracefulness there is an admirable modelling. Everything goes beyond limits. They call this gentle But it is powerful gentleness. And one cannot find words.

“The lips like a lake of pleasure, are bordered with quivering nostrils of such nobility.

“The mouth, sinuous like a snake. undulates its amidst wet delights. The eyes, closed and gently protruding eyes closed with a seam of eyelashes.

“The beautiful serenity of the eyes, their calm look, the tranquil joy of their calm.

“These eyes, shaped with an extraordinary refinement. like a precious enamel.

“The mouth which seems a refuge for most gentle thoughts but also a volcano for the furies of passion.”

“Through this mouth life eternally enters and goes out like bees entering and going out. Sweet and perfumed breath”. And verily art lovers from all corners of the earth come as pilgrims to have a vision of this Dancing Lord.

Tillai-k-kūttan :

Ānanda Tāndava Nataraja in worship in the temple of the Lord at Chidambaram is of surpassing beauty. As it cannot be seen at close quarters, one cannot have the satisfaction of appreciating in full. The bubbling smile of the Lord - kumiṇ cirippu, one cannot enjoy elsewhere. What else is there to see for the eyes, after having seen the smiling face of the Lord ?

Ādalvallān :

Inscriptions refer to the dancing Lord as Ādalvallān and Ādalvallār. Among the many bronze deities gifted to the Rājara-jēccuram temple at Tanjāvūr by Rajaraja the Great, that of Ādalvallān does not con-form to the details mentioned in the inscription

on Ādalvallār. Nataraja gifted by Chōlamādevi, the Queen of Rajarajais called with respect in plural as Ādalvallār. Rajaraja's got the nomenclature Ādalvallān in masculine singular after the traditional mode of calling the Lord as Iraivan and Sivan. That the Dancing Lord in bronze in the Tanjāvūr temple resembles the stone image in the south prakaram and the painting in the western wall enclosing the sanctum sactorum, is confirmatory test that the same is Ādalvallān installed by Rajaraja I. "Not so very wellknown, but undoubtedly one of the great masterpieces of the Chola Age, is the large Nataraja in the Brihadisvara temple at Tanjāvūr a worthy processional deity, befitting the mighty temple erected by the Emperor Rajaraja and presented by him to the shrine, along with other images", writes C. Sivaramamurti.

#### The Polonnaruwa Lord :

One of the greatest Nataraja Chola images is on view at the Museum at Colombo. In the words of Benjamin Rowland, "The figure, a perfect fusion of serenity and balance, moves in slow and gracious rhythm, lacking the usual violence of the cosmic dance; this is a cadenced movement communicated largely by the centrifugal space-embracing position of the arms and the suggestion of the figures revolving in space. The turning effect that comes from the arrangement of the multiple arms one behind another, and the torsion of the figure, emphasised by the directions of the limbs, give something of the effect of *figura serpentinata* in Mannerist sculpture that seems to coerce the beholder into a consecutive inspection of the image from every angle. Although cast in human shape, the abstraction of modelling and iconographic explicitness give them the power of a diagram."

#### Some details of interest in Ananda Tandavam Bronzes :

A Nataraja bronze portraying Siva's Dance of Bliss-Sivānanda-k-kūttu, can be studied in diverse ways. The Lord stands on Muyalakan trampling him with his right foot. His two upper hands are sounding the kettle drum and holding the fire, on either side of his body. The right lower hand shows the Fear-not sign, while his left one is thrown accross the stomach and hangs down pointing to the left lifted foot. A perfect piece satisfies the confirmatory test as follows. When water is poured over the head of

a Nataraja bronze in Ananda Tandavam, it takes its course first flowing down to the tip of the nose, the descending on the finger of the hand thrown accross the stomach and ultimately on the toe of the lifted foot. Such a bronze is said to be a perfect one according to the texts.

Nataraja bronzes are all processional deities. These deities in worship are dancing figures standing on one leg trampling Muyalakan who lies on a pedestal. A Tiruvasi goes round in some cases being part and parcel of the bronze and portable in some others. Whatever it be, there is the danger of the broze losing its balance, as some of them are heavy. As such unless the centre of gravity of the bronze is safeguarded, there is the likelihood of it breaking down. Some bronzes housed in the Madras Government Museum, when measured, give out some interesting data. The middle points of the two upper hands and the centre of the planted foot of the Nataraja in Ananda Tandavam pose may be joined by straight lines. An inverted equilateral triangle is got. Details are as under:—

| Particulars of the Bronze |          | Length between the two upper hands | Length between the centre of the planted foot and the hand with drum | Length between the centre of the planted foot and the hand with fire |
|---------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Tiruvāḷankādu             | Nataraja | 90 cm.                             | 90 cm.   | 90 cm.   |
| Kothangudi                | „        | 68 cm.                             | 68 cm.   | 68 cm.   |
| Kaṅkoduttavanitam         | „        | 67 cm.                             | 67 cm.   | 67 cm.   |
| Vēḷankaṇṇi                | „        | 63.5cm.                            | 66 cm.   | 66 cm.   |

A few details of interest of Ananda Tandavam Bronzes housed in the Madras Museum.

| Place of origin      | Height  | Tiruvasi<br>Yes/No | Ganga<br>Yes/No                            | Period               |
|----------------------|---------|--------------------|--|----------------------|
| Kuram                | 53 cm.  | No                 | No   | 9th century<br>A. D. |
| Okkur                |         | Yes                | No   | "                    |
| Kunniyur             | 116 cm. |                    | Not<br>certain                             |                      |
| Velankanni           | 112 cm. | Yes                | No   | 10th "               |
| Poruppumettu-p-patti |         | De-<br>tached      | No   | "                    |
| Melapperumpallam     | 90 cm.  | Yes                | No   |                      |
| Kankoduttavanitam    | 115 cm. | Yes                | Yes in<br>the form<br>of a<br>mer-<br>maid | 13th "               |
| Punganur             | 78 cm.  | No                 | Yes  | "                    |
| Kothangudi           | 132 cm. | Yes                | Yes  |                      |

**Poruppumettupatti Nataraja :**

A very rare bronze noticed in the Bronze Gallery of the Madras Museum is what is termed as Kāl Māri Ādiyavar—the Lord who danced changing his legs. Instead of standing on the right leg and raising the left foot, here the legs are reversed. Kumara-guruparar speaks of the Lord lifting his left foot :

takkanār vēḷvi takertuccamar muditta  
nakkanār tillai natarācar okkar  
padappāyalānkānap paintodi tal enrō  
idappātam tūkkiyavā inṟu

Nataraja of Tillai who destroyed the sacrifice performed by Takkan and laughed, lifted his left foot in dance for the hooded serpent bed (of Vishnu) to witness.

Traditionally Nataraja is taken to have danced lifting his left foot and innumerable bronzes in worship in temples all over the length and breadth of the Tamil country bear testimony to this. In this bronze from the ancient Pandya country, we see the Lord raising his right foot with his left foot planted on Muyalakan the dwarf, symbol of ignorance. Before examining this precious piece, it would be fruitful to know the circumstances leading to the change of posture. The Tiruvīlaiyādal Purāṇam explains the story behind it. Rājasēkharan succeeded his father Vikrama Pāndyan as the monarch of Madurai. Of the sixty-four arts, he acquired proficiency in sixty-three except in the art of dance out of devotion to the Dancing Lord. Karikālan was then ruling over the Chola country. A visiting bard from there had a dig at the Pandyan king saying that while his monarch had mastered all the 64 arts, Rajasekharan was lacking in his knowledge on dance. The king was stung to the quick and he began in right earnest learning the art of dance, i.e. Bha—Ra—Tam.

pāvamodu arākam tālam immūnrum pakarnidu muraiyār  
paratam.

As this is said to be along with bhavam, ragam and talam this is known as bharatam.

While learning the intricacies of the art, the king could realise the difficulty and the pain caused due to the aching of limbs. He thought the same would be the case with the Lord dancing in Velliambalam—the Hall of Silver. He has been dancing since long with the right foot planted and the left raised. What an ordeal for the Lord! He prayed to the Lord: “I shall run into my sword and perish unless you, my Lord, change the position of your legs and get some respite.” Before he could do that, the Lord obliged him and began his dance planting his left foot on Muyalakan and lifting his right foot. The king was mightily pleased.

enrum ippadiye intat tirunatam yarum kana  
ninrarul ceyya vendum nirumalamna velli  
manrava adiyen vendum varamitu venru talntan  
anru tottu inrum enkon annata nilaiyay ninran

‘For all time, my Lord of the Silver Hall, bless all with this posture. This in the boon I crave of Thee.’ So said the king and till this day, the Lord maintains the same posture.

The bronze depicting the Lord who reversed the position of his leg, stands on a rectangular pedestal 53 cm. long, 34.5 cm. broad and 18.5 cm. high. On either side of the pedestal are seen two yalis projected—bodies of a lion and the head of an elephant. In the front of the sunken middle portion lion motifs are found. Floral designs are seen on the sides. Nataraja here is trampling Muyalakan lying upside down with his head raised holding a hooded cobra in his left hand consistent with his own big size. The Lord nonchalantly has lifted his right leg, the ankle crossing the lower part of the left thigh. No change in position is noticed of the hands of protection and the left hand hanging like trunk of an elephant across the chest. With the change in position of the legs, the body of the Lord leans to the left, while the head is tilted to the right. The drum and the fire symbolising the creative and destructive acts of God change position from one end to the other. The drum is clutched firmly between the thumb and three fingers in the left hand and the fire with five tongues is on the right palm. The Lord is seen with a bewitching smile and the matted locks of hair are seen on either side upto the head-dress. The crescent moon is seen on the right top of the head-dress. Ganga does not find a place.

Except for a couple of bronzes in worship in the Maravai Minakshi Sundareswarar temple in the reversed position of the legs belonging to the Naik period, none other similar model has been unearthed so far. “As important as the Tiruvalankadu Nataraja himself is the magnificent Nataraja from Poruppumettupatti,” observes C. Sivaramamurti. P. R. Srinivasan notices the resemblance of an inverted conch to the fire held in the hand. He is all admiration for this bronze: “Though it is the only specimen known of the school, yet that the school was vigorous and was capable of producing works of merit is borne out amply by this Natesa alone. If this was done under the orders of a Pandyan king, then that King’s cultural attainments and interest in arts hardly require any other confirmatory evidence.”



## Epilogue

A brief survey has been made of the Lord of Dance. The Chola bronzes especially in the Ananda Tandavam mode are undoubtedly more elegant and handsome than the few Pallava ones and the Tiruvasis of the former underwent changes enhancing their beauty and conforming to geometrical necessity forming part of the whole. A sizable literature on the Lord of Dance has grown both in the West and the East, of course in India. The hymns on the Lord of Tillai in Tamil from the kernel, basic material for the study of Kūttan, Adalvallaṅ, the Dancing Beauty and what not. It is to Ananda K. Coomaraswamy that the world of art and literature is indebted for his marvellous essay, THE DANCE OF SIVA. A treatise by S. Dandapani Desikar, ADALVALAṅ in Tamil has not perhaps attracted the attention of the scholarly world. C. Sivaramamurti's NATARAJA IN ART, THOUGHT AND LITERATURE provides a mass of material on Nataraja images and it must not be considered as casting reflection on his scholarship, if it is said that he has followed the pattern set out in Desikar's Adalvallar, and must have derived benefit from the same. He has included Adalvallar in his bibliography. It must not be construed that the last word on the subject has not been said on the subject and in spite of what has been produced so far, a lot more has to be focussed and brought to light.

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### **Tamil Works**

Aṟputa-t-tiruvantāti

Kalittokai

Kōyil Purāṇam

Silappadhikāram

Tēvaram of Gnānasambandhar, Appar and Sundarar.

Tiruvācagam

Tirumantiram

Mūttatiru-patikankal.

Iraṭṭaimaṇimālai

Tīru Aruṭpa

# **The Temples of Kanchipuram**

**D. Dayalan**

The name of Kanchipuram ( Lat. 12°50' ; Long. 79°40' E ) is associated with a cluster of magnificent temple ( and also gorgeously coloured silks ), constituting virtually a complete record of the Tamil Nadu Architecture. The artistic excellence of the temples, coupled with its sanctity as one of the seven sacred cities of India, Kanchipuram attracts streams of visitors from the nook and corners of the world throughout the Year. It has been a centre of learning and culture for centuries. Buddhism and Jainism once flourished here, side by side with Hinduism. Adi Sankara, one of the famous saints of India, established his episcopal seat ( Kamakotipeetam ) here.

Kanchipuram, at present the Head Quarters of the Chengleput District, is situated 72 Kilometres from Madras City in the west-south-westerly direction. It is well connected to important places on all sides by road and rail.

## **History**

Kanchipuram, the city of temples, is one of the reputed Muktishetras, played a dominant role in the political and cultural history of our country from as early as the third century B.C. Hiuen-Tsang, the Chinese traveller who came to Kanchipuram early in the 7th Century A.D. had seen and described the stupa, which was built by Asoka here. Even earlier to that the pristine glory and importance of Kanchipuram is well attested to in the puranic literature. But an authentic and historical limelight of Kanchipuram is first thrown only during the Sangam period. Perumbāṇāṟuppadai vividly describes Kanchipuram and its City plan, as compared to the form of the Lotus.

Kanchipuram was a reputed centre of learning, attracted students from far and beyond, right from the earlier times. Patañjali, the great grammarian of the 2nd Century B.C. referred to the word "Kañchipuraka", meaning one associated and hailing from Kañchi". From the mention of the word "Kañchi

puraka" it can be conjectured that the place Kanchipuram would have been an intellectual centre, acknowledged as such by Patañjali. Mayūrasarman, the founder of the Kadambā dynasty came to Kañchipuram for higher studies in the reputed University called "Ghatika". Hiuen-Tsang has praised the city for its intellectual eminence.

Besides the Chola king Karikāla, who according to the Tiruvālangadu copper plates, rebuilt or embellished with gold the city of Kanchi, there is yet another king whose association with Kanchi is revealed by the verse of the Sangam work called Perumpāṇāṟuppadai. It seems Kanchipuram served as his Capital.

During the Pallava regime (A. D 4th Cent - 9th Cent), Kanchipuram functioned as a nucleus of all their activities. The temple building activity was in full swing during this period. They have dotted the whole of Kanchipuram and its surrounding with cluster of monuments numbering more than 30. Hiuen Tsang, who visited Kanchipuram during this period, enumerates some eight Deva temples, and hundreds of Sangharamas here.

Kanchipuram, continued to serve as the seat of the royal power though as secondary capital in the Chola times, owing to its earlier and traditional prominence, Vijayālaya, the founder of the imperial Chola line, extended the Chola suzerainty over Kanchipuram. Though the centre of gravity of the Building activity was shifted to Thanjavur during this period. Kanchipuram was not totally neglected, as is testified not only by the inscriptions recording the construction and renovation of the temples, but also by the existence of the Chola temples there.

After Cholas, the Pandyas, Hoysalas, Telugu-Chodas and other minor Dynasties had their sway over Kanchi, for a very short period. Finally, Kampana (A D. 1344-77) son of Bukka I of the Vijayanagar empire, supplanted the Sambuvaraya chiefs of padaividu and established their rule over Kanchipuram. During the Vijayanagar period many additions and alterations were made to the already existing temples. Supplementary to the Construction of

new ones. Huge Prakara, high gopura, pillared mandapa are the characteristic features of the Vijayanagara Architecture.

## The Temples

"Tamil Nadu is the name of a lyrical landscape which stretches from lower Andhra Pradesh to the tip of Kanyakumari, its lands watered by the Pennaiyār, Kaveri, Noyyal, Amarāvati and other minor rivers which flow down from Mysore mountains to the north and the ghats of Kerala to the west with the Bay of Bengal washing its Eastern Shores and the Indian Ocean kissing it on its chin". Tamil Nadu is truly called the haven of the vibrant and live practitioners and legatees of the architectural heritage. It is a land of art treasury. Prior to the first known standing monuments like the cave-art of the Pallavas and Pandyas there was existence of structural forms of temples in very early times Tamil Nadu. It is however clear by both direct evidence like 'Mandagappattu' record as well as indirect stylistic evidence that before temples of durable materials were erected, brick, mortar and timber were the media. So it is obvious that, wood and brick had been used for constructions of secular as well as religious edifices in the earlier times. A change in this situation was clearly heralded, for the first time in the early Pallava period. The strong traditional association of stone with the dead, Prevailing among the peoples of the south must have been a deterrent to the adoption of stone as material in temple building till about the close of the sixth century and in carving images of gods for worship till the first half of the seventh century.

As far as Kanchipuram is concerned, though we do not have any material evidence to show the existence of the monuments prior to the Pallava period, we have a vivid word picture of it, in the Sangam literature.

Mahendravarman I, Was really a vichitra-chitta (inventive or curious minded) who initiated the art of scooping out the rock for the abodes of Hindu deities, dotted in the suburb of Kanchipuram with many such creations. Materially speaking we do not have any temple built by Mahendravarman in Kanchi-

puram. But, a pillar found in the ruined mandapa near the thousand-pillared mandapa in the third Prakara of the Ekambareswara temple has an inscription in pallava-grantha characters of the 7th century A.D. which gives various birudas of Mahendravarman I (A.D.c. 580-630) This pillar must have evidently formed part of a structural temple of the time of Mahendravarman I, probably built in the area.

The reign of Narasimhavarman II, Rajasimha (A.D. 690-800) who "bestowed his wealth in temples and brahmanas" was eventful in many respects. For art and architecture, this fairly sustained and peaceful reign was epoch making. in the sense that structural temples in stone were reared up for the first time on an extensive scale.

As many as six or seven temples were built at Kanchipuram besides four major temples at Mamallapuram and one more at Panamalai, during his rule.

#### **I. Piravataneswara Temple :**

The Piravataneswara temple is built out of coarse sandstone. It is a small two storeyed square based vimana of the typical Dravidian architecture order. The walls have contoning and intermediate pilasters, based an rearing vyalas, characteristic of Rajasimha pillars. The first tala (tier) carries a hara of four karnakutas and four bhadrasalas. The second tala (tier) is devoid of the haras, the bhutas or nandis at the corner. The griva is prismatic and the sikhara is octagonal in shape. The adhithana is raised over an upapitha with pilaster decorations and top granite slab and consists of the upana. Jagati, tripattakumuda Kantha and Pattika, which again is of granite slabs. The kantha, projected forward at intervals below the wall pilasters, a feature rather rare in Rajasimha's time, is truly the imitation of the basal wooden support for the broad based and pilliar bases.

The shrine walls have niches (Devakōṣṭhas) with toranas above. The devakōṣṭha to the south contains the Dakshināmurti form, on north and east are the forms of Siva with Brahmā and Viṣṇu as attendants. The ardhamandapa also

has Devakōṭhas. The northern niche contains the image of Durga, whereas the southern niche has the image of Gajalakshmi. Ganesa also appears on the superstructure of this temple and was a new creation of Rajasimha in the Pallava iconography or sculpture. The sanctum rear wall has a bas-relief of Somaskanda. Stylistically this temple can be dated as earlier to all the temples of Rajasimha at Kanchipuram.

### **Airavateswara Temple :**

Airavateswara temple, also built out of sandstone, has lost its superstructure. The adhistana of the square sikhara body resting on upapitha with a granite Pattika on the top. Like other temples of Rajasimha, the walls of this temple is also embellished with rearing vyala-based pilasters. The cardinal niches have the images of Brahma on the north, Vishnu on the east and Dakshnamurthi on the south. An image of Durga appears on the north ardhmandapa wall and a form of Siva is found on the southern wall.

Interior of the ardhmandapa is also decorated with panels like Kalāri and a natamurti of Siva. A Sōmaskanda panel is carved on the back wall of the garbhagriha.

### **Kailasanatha Temple :**

The Kailasanatha, is the largest temple complex built by Rajasimha and added to by his son Mahendravarman III in his father's life time. The main vimana of the Rajasimheswara is a typical Dravida Style of square sikhara type with four tiers, facing east. Its aditala is integrated with seven abutting sub-shrines, square ones in the four corners and oblong ones on the three sides on the diagonal and cardinal axials. All the sub-shrines have independent entrances and enshrined icons.

The main Vimana has a high adhisthana with mouldings and excellent ornamentation. The Jagati position of the adhisthana is embellished with friezes of bhutas, some with animal and some with demon faces. They are depicted in various poses of dance and merriment. The Tripatta Kumuda found over the Jagati in the adhisthana is also exquisitely carved with various ornamentations. The wall of the temple has been adorned with vyala-based plas-



ters. Unlike the sculptures defined only in the Cardinal niches, the whole wall has been crowded with number of beautiful sculptures, making the Kailasanatha temple as a veritable treasure house of Saivite Iconographic forms. This is the richest of all Pallava shrines in terms of figural decoration

The first and third tala has the usual hāra with Karnakūtas and bhadrāsālas, but the second tala has Pañjaras in addition to that, a pattern met with for the first time. The fourth tala has bull figures at the corners. The Octagonal griva shows figures of Śiva, Dakṣiṇāmurthy, Viṣṇu and Brahma on the East, South, West and North directions respectively. The Sikhara has Mahānāṣis on all eight of its faces.

The garbhagṛiha has a Sōmaskanda Panel on its rear wall, obscured partially from view by the centrally placed eight-foot Prismatic dharalinga of black stone characteristic of Rajasimha's time, in which such Lingas seem to have been introduced.

In front of the main Vimana has a Detached mandapa known as Rajasimha mandapa. It is flat topped, with cantoning walls at the corners and pair of pillars at the intermediate openings of its four faces and with more such pillars in rows inside. Dwarapālakas appear in niches on the east, Lakṣmi and Saraswati on the south, and Durga and Jyestha on the north.

Standing in front in the same axial line is the Mahendravarman III in his scheme of elaboration of his father's temple Unit. It is a two tier vimana with wagon vaulted roof like sikhara known technically as Sāla sikhara. It is also constructed in sandstone except the upana and Pattika of the adhithana which is made out of granite slabs. This vimana contains a Sōmaskanda Panel on its rear wall and a prismatic Dharalinga of basalt in the centre of the floor of the sanctum.

Another interesting feature of the Kailasanatha Complex is the fityeight sub-shrines surrounding the main Rajasimheswara, forming a connected cloister-like chain round the inner face of the prakara wall. All the sub-shrines are of (except the two coming opposite the north-south median axial line of the main

vimana) two tiered square sikhara type, enshrining mostly the form of Siva either in painting or in bas-reliefs. The two exceptions are two tiered Nagara Vimanas with wagon-top roofs, dedicated to Vishnu and Brahma. The external walls of these Parivara shrines of the mālika contain a variety of sculptures both Saivite and Vaishnavite of varied iconography and plastic art. The sculptures include the Dikpalas, Ganesa, Saptamatrika, Chandesa and other parivara deities.

In front of the Kailasanatha complex stands a row of dedicatory shrines or memorial vimanas, six to the left and two to the right of the main gopura entrance. The main object of worship in these shrines are Dharalinga, with the Somaskanda panel on the back wall. The exterior of the shrines also depict various Saivite themes like Sōmaskanda, Lingodbhava, Kālari, Yōgamurti, Gajasamhāra, Tripurāntaka, Dakshināmurthi, Hara and others. Two of the north row of shrines were gifted by two queens of Rajasimha, the fifth in the row was clearly built by Rangapataka, the favourite queen of Rajasimha,

Other important temples of Rajasimha worthy of mention are Irāvātēswara and Tripurāntakeśwara. Both are small, sandstone temples except the granite upana and topping Pattika of the adhithana. These are also constructed in typical Dravidian style of pyramidal elevation with diminishing storeys. The cantoning walls have vyala-based pilasters arranged at the corners. The wall of the Irāvātēśwara temple is embellished with figures of Siva in various forms. The griva of this temple shows Bull figures at the corners. The griva devatas are Siva (east) Dakshināmurthi (south) Vishnu (west) and Brahma (north). It is quite interesting to mention that the Juvenile ascetic, seated reverentially beside Vyasa, who along with Jaimini, flanks Dakshināmurthi found in the Eravaneswara temple is identified by the Doyen C. Sivaramamurthi as Sankara the only portrait of the greatest intellectual of India for all time.

The Vāliswara temple found near a tank outside the inner prakara of the Ēkambaranatha temple is also a Rajasimha creation perhaps in the later part of his reign. As usual, this temple is also a Samacaturasra Dravida Vimana with three tiers, built in

sandstone. In contrast to other Rajasimha temples, the cella of this temple enshrines a panel of Siva and Uma (Umasahita) instead of Somaskanda.

The reign of Nandivarman Pallavamalla (A. D. 731-796), is eventful both for social advancement and artistic enrichment. Following the footsteps of his predecessor, Rajasimha also constructed many temples at Kanchipuram.

### **The Vaikunta Perumal Temple :**

The Vaikuntaperumal or Parameswara Vinnagaram is one of the magnificent creations during Nandivarman II's reign. It is a typical dravida vimana with four tiers, facing west with a frontal mukhamandapa, both standing over a tall adhisthana. The temple complex is surrounded by a cloister mandapa, externally walled by the prakara and internally colonnaded. The narrow path between it and the temple is served as an open circumambulatory path around the temple. The structure is built entirely of sandstone, the floor below the adhisthana and the pattika on its top above being of granite slabs. The three tiers below are functional, providing cells for three forms of Vishnu (sitting, standing and reclining.) The top tier merely symbolic, without any opening, is a solid cube, probably added to beautify the temple in proportion to its base. All the three tiers have ambulatory passage, achieved by the system of three concentric walls successively increasing its height one behind the other. Upto the third tala, it has haramala consisting of Karnatakūtas, bhadrasālas and pañjaras, whereas the fourth tier is devoid of the hāra. It had formerly four lions at the corners, now replaced by four seated Garuda figures, both the lion and garuda being appropriate cognizances of Vishnu. The cloister wall, which is of lesser height than the first tier has haramala consisting of kutas and salas. The interior of this wall has the depictions of the historical events which led to Nandivarman II's coming to the throne. It quite interestingly echoes the various procedures followed during the coronation of the king and also the contemporary social activities. The depiction of the historical event in the temple, through initiated by Rajasimha in the shore temple at Mamallapuram, takes its perfection here.

The figures found on the vimana, ardhmandapa, walls and other places makes the temple a Museum for studying the Vaishnavite Iconography. Rich in Iconographical detail, conscious of beauty and with exquisite and seductive charm of the sculptures makes the art become sensuous and sophisticated, receives the admiration of every visitor.

### **Mukteswara and Matangeswara Temples :**

The Mukteswara, also called Dharmamahadevi Iswaram, after the name of Nandivarman II's queen, as revealed by the Inscription found in the temple and the Matangeswara also constructed during the reign of Nandivarman though found in two different places in Kanchi, are alike in many respects. Both are square, three tier vesara type vimana with circular griva and sikhara. These are the earliest extant temples to possess a circular griva and sikhara, though the models of these forms are represented in the Bhima Ratha, at Mamallapuram. Both the temples are standing with their front mandapa on a raised adhistana, which is again placed on upapithas. Like the other temples of Kanchipuram except the granite floor and top of the upapitha and the pattika over the adhistana, the whole temple is built out of sandstone. First and second tiers of both the temples have hāramala consisting of Karnakūtas and sālas. The third tier is devoid of hāramala, but carries four nandis at the corners.

Sculptures on the walls of both temples are mostly sunk reliefs. Sri. K. R. Srinivasan is of the opinion that these may have been carved several years after the original construction.

### **Temples Under the Cholas :**

The rule of the Cholas (A.D. 900-1300) was one of retrogression in the sphere of art and architecture of Tamilnadu. Though the hub of the activities of Cholas transferred to Thanjavur, Kanchipuram was not totally abandoned from any constructional activity. In fact they maintained the sanctity of Kanchipuram by adding many more temples.

### **Sokkeswara Temple :**

It has square vimana with circular griva and sikhara. The niches once had the customary triad of Dakshināmurthi (south) Vishnu (west) and Brahma (north). The figure of Narasimha found in the western grivakostha speaks the artistic glory of this temple. Dating this temple is a matter of controversy among the scholars. Mr. S. R. Balasubrahmanyam takes the parakesari inscription found here as that of Chola Parantaka I (A.D. 907-954). But Mr. K. R. Srinivasan suggested on the stylistic basis that it can hardly be earlier than (A.D.) 1025 and takes it to the middle phase of Chola temples.

### **Varadarajaswami Temple :**

Varadarajaswami temple, a grand and imposing edifice that adorns Kanchi is located in the place presently known as 'Vishnu Kanchi'. No doubt this temple was in existence during the Pallava Period, as attested by the hymns of Bhōḍattālar. But practically we do not have any vestiges of that period. The earliest inscription found here is dated in the 32nd year (A. D. 1050) of Rajadhiraja Chola I. The vast and impressive complex of structures of Varadarajaswami temple, as seen today, was not built all at one and the same time, but was periodically added on to for many centuries. Prof. K. V. Raman, has traced out four stages of development of this temple complex. As one of the largest temple-complexes of South India, covering an area of 377.40 metres long and 221.65 metres broad, this temple has four prakara with two main entrances one on the west which is the principal entrance and another on the east. Architecturally this temple claims a unique position because of the peculiar and almost intriguing feature known as Hastigiri (Elephant Hill). It is in the form of a square enclosure closed by huge walls of about 7.3 metres height covering an area of 30 metres square. The main sanctuary of Varadaraja in standing pose is placed on it. The reason for this elevation is possibly to give a hill-like elevation to the temple. Apart from this, some puranic and agamic reasons are also put forward for this elevation.

Though Varadaraja, the bestower of boon, is the presiding God of this temple, it has a cluster of subsidiary shrines added

during the long run of its history, accomodating Various forms of Vishnu, Devi, devotees and minor deities.

The hundred pillared mandapa found within the temple, built by the Vijayanagara kings is renowned for its amazing sculptural beauty. The ornamental rings carved out of single stone at four corners of the mandapa in a chainlike fashion, spirited row of horses prancing on the pillars and the monkey and the cat running after the pigeons on the roofline are unforgettable gems of art.

### **Jvaraharesvara Temple**

Jvaraharesvara, a significant example of a temple of the time of Kulöttunga III is although smaller in size, but quite interesting because of its ornamentation and architectural features. This temple consists of an east-facing vimana, ardha mandpa, mahamandapa, agramandapa, Nandi mandapa and a large balipitha. The temple was in a ruined condition earlier, but was reassembled faithfully, retaining the original character in the recent past. The vimana of this temple was probably a two tier structure, both storeys elliptical as would have been the griva and sikhara. The grilled windows with various figurines, the loops of the mala on the shaft of the pillar filled with tiny figure sculpture and floral carvings the row of bhuta figure below the cornice, in various mode are some of the artistic examples, which make this temple indisputably one of the most refined and beautiful temples at Kanchipuram

The oblong, wagon vaulted roofed, Pandava-p-perumal temple is also a best example of the Cholas datable to C. Mid-11th century A. D. It is a two-tired vimana, ehshrining the reclining Vishnu with figures of the Pandavas.

### **Sri Ekambaresvara temple:-**

Sri Thirukachi Ekambaranathar, praised as such in the hymns of Tirugnanasambandar, Tirunavukkarasar, Sundaramoorthi and Mānikavachakar is one of the magnificent temples, equal/ in rank to the Varadarajaperumal temple and occupies an area

of more than 30 acres. It is a massive edifice having five Prakaras, thousand pillared mandapas, and many subsidiary shrines. Like Varadaraja perumal temple, this temple also attained the present size, as the result of many centuries of growth and development. The massive out wall and the 192 feet gopura were constructed by Sri Krishna Devaraya in A.D. 1509. Tradition asserts that this temple contains prithivilinga which is one of the five lingas of South India. The mango tree is the Sthalavriksha of the temple, that is why the God is named as Ēkambaresvara. There is an old mango tree in the temple which is worshipped even to-day with great veneration. There is a popular belief that the four branches of the tree representing the four vedas, and each branch bears fruit, with different tastes. The corridor of the temple has plenty of lingas in various sizes and the idols of 63 Nayanmars. One linga with 108 miniature lingas and another with 1008 miniature lingas are also near the sacred mango tree. Kachchiyappar, a Sivacharya in Kumara Kottam at Kanchi had released his work Kandapurānam, the Tamil translation of the Skandapurana by reading it in the presence of Vikatachakra Vinayaga in the thousand pillared mandapa of Ekambareswara. The sanctity of the temple coupled with pompous celebrations throughout the year makes this temple as a superb pilgrimist destination.

### **Sri Kamakshi amman temple :-**

Sri Kāmakshi Amman temple is one of the reputed centres of the Sakthi worship and is also accounted as one among the three renowned Sakthi seats. The other two being the Madurai Meenakshi and Kāsi Visalakshi. This temple is situated almost in the centre of big Kanchipuram and is surrounded by main streets (Raja Vithis) on all the four sides. The temple is encircled by huge prakara wall with four entrances, but the main entrance is in the east. The temple is, of course, has long history tracing from earlier times, but the present structure is possibly of a very late date. The earliest epigraphical reference to Kāmakkottam is found in an inscription dated 1259 AD from Tripuran-takam, Kurnool District. Since then every Devi shrine in the Tamil Country has come to be known as Kamakkottam. Kanchi being the important centre of Devi-cult as evidenced by the Puranas

and by the canonical literature of the Tamil saints, Kamakshi occupies an important place at Kanchi where Kāmakshi herself is called Kāmakoti. It is believed that the very city is said to have been built in the form of Sri Chakra according to the Sakta agamas. But it is curious to note that all the inscriptions which refer to Kāmakshi are latter ones dating mostly from the Vijayanagara period.

Gifts of cows for the ghee for lamps in the Kamakshi temple were given in the reign of Māravarman Kulasekhara (A.D. 1268-1310) and Māravarman Parakrama Pandya (A.D. 1335-52) during the brief occupation of Kanchi by the Pandyas.

Most of the Vijayanagara kings starting from Hari Hara II, had taken special care for the welfare and development of the Kāmakshi Amman temple by making numerous donations and structural additions. Hari Hara II, (AD 1377-1404) is known to have covered with copper the Srivimana of the Kamakshi temple. Dēvaraya is said to have performed tuḷābhara with pearls here, after his return from the victorious march against the chiefs in the south.

According to puranas it is said that Sakti emanated as Kamakshi from the bilakasa before getting herself consecrated at the Kāmakshi temple. Traditionally there is a belief that there was a delightful grove of Champaka trees around the main shrine now known as Gayatri Mandapam. The devas took the form of parrots and worshipped Sri Devi here. Sri Devi after giving protection to the Devas enshrined herself in the Sri Chakra in sookasma form. This Sri Chakra, just in front of Sri Devi is considered more sacred and all puja and prayers are offered to it.

Sri Adi Sankara, who was born at Kaladi in Kerala, travelled all over India and propagated the *advaita* philosophy by enlightening true worth and value of the vedas and upanishads. He established five maṭas in different zones of India, one of which was at Kanchi while the others were at Sringeri, Dwaraka, Badrinath and Puri. The Legendary account connecting Adisankara with Goddess Kamakshi was that the Goddess used to take the form of Kali at nights and caused havoc to the people and the country. There-



upon Sankarar did penance to please the Goddess and restrain Her from causing terror to the people. Very much pleased by the deep devotion and prayer of Sankarar, the Divine Mother assured him that She would not stir out of the temple without his permission. He is said to have consecrated a yantra in the Srichakra, which is found in the sanctum-sanctorum of this temple.

There is separate shrine for Adisankara within the Prakara and the first honour is paid to him before any festival is begun.

\* Other important shrines found within this temple complex are Sri Kalvar (vishnu) shrine, Mahalakshmi shrine, Sri Annapurna Devi shrine and Dharma Shastha shrine.

The name Pancha Ganga, also woven with many legendary stories serves as a sacred tank in the temple.

### **Sri Ulagalandar Temple**

This temple is situated in the centre of Kanchipuram and can be easily approached from any direction. Out of the eighteen sacred Vaishnavite shrines in the city of Kanchipuram, five are located in the Ulagalandar temple itself. They are Ulagalandar, Karai-kathan, Ooraikaththan, Neeraikaththan and Kārvannaththan. The lord Ulagalandar an extraordinary artistic product, is so gigantic measuring 10 metres high, kindles emotion and ambition of the devotees and visitors, Stretches out his leg as if in the attitude of measuring the three worlds. Another leg is placed firmly on the head of King Bali. Though the temple was in existence, during the Chola times as attested by the inscription found here stating that Tribhuvanam daiyal, the queen of Kulottunga I (A.D. 1070—1122) made tax-free land gift to this temple, the present structure seems to be built by the Vijayanagar emperor in 17th century. This temple has also the credit of having their earliest inscription of the Pandyas dated to A.D. 1228 at Kanchipuram. This temple is not only renowned for its sanctity, but also for giving distinguished personalities to the scholarly world like Parimel Alagar, the expert commentator of Tirukkural of the 13th century A.D. He was a priest of this famed Ulagalandaperumal temple.

### **Sri Kumarakkottam Temple :**

The worship of Kumaran also known as Murugan, Seyon has highest antiquity. The Sangam works treat him as the God of hills and its surroundings, and is a popular deity among the Tamilian society from the earliest time onwards. The present Kumarakkottam, the abode of Kumara at Kanchipuram is modern construction built only in the recent past. But the evidences show that this temple would be under worship little earlier, as it earns the praise of Arunagirinathar, the famous author of Thiruppugazh. It is astonishing to note that Sri Kachiyappa Sivachariar got here only the divine grace to begin his great work Kandapuramam in Tamil.

According to the traditional accounts that once when Lord Brahma was himself unable to explain the meaning of the sacred "ohm", Lord Subramania put Brahma in custody and took charge of his work of creation also. There upon Lord Siva deputed Nandideva to Muruga so as to set Brahma free. Muruga first declined and then wishing to propitiate for his refusal established a shrine for Lord Siva and did penance here.

### **Kachapeswarar Temple :**

The Kachapeswarar temple, situated on the western part of Kanchipuram, is facing to the east with the main entrance on the north. It is one of the glorious temples in Kanchipuram and its origin and greatness are vividly dealt in the book called Kanchipuramam.

While churning the milky ocean to get ambrosia by the asuras and devas. Vishnu took the form of huge tortoise to support the mount Mandara, the churning shaft. The puranic narration further states that after all was over, the tortoise, became very proud and caused havoc in the water. The activities of Vishnu in the form of tortoise, being intolerable to the gods and people they appealed to Lord Siva, who promised to make the tortoise become calm and gentle as before and did so accordingly.

This puranic account is transferred into the stone as sculpture here, where the tortoise is shown worshipping Lord Siva. Lord

Siva is said to have taken the form of jothirlinga here during the Pralaya.

Besides the above said temples there are numerous shrines, scattered throughout the locality. numbering more than 200 temples. Of them, mention may be made of the well-known Chitragupta Swami temple to the east of rettai mandapam (Big Kanchipuram,) the Ashta bhujam temple, which received the praise of Alvars, Sri Yathokthakari temple, Sri Vilakkoli Perumal temple and Sri Saryavirateswarar temple a few furlong to the east of Kanchipuram. There is nothing outstanding about these temples, most of them being late and specimens of a period when the creative forces were thoroughly exhausted.

### **Jaina Temple in Kanchipuram :**

It is well known that Kanchipuram was a noted centre of learning and also the cradle of Jainism from the beginning of the Christian Era. Jina Kanchipuram, is included as one of the four seats of learning by the Digambara jains of mysore. Jina-Kanchipuram has been identified with the village of Tirupparuttikunram, lying on the right bank of the vegavati at a distance of two miles from the town of Kanchi. It was an important centre of Jainism during the days of Simhavarman and Simhavishnu as attested by the Pallankōvil copper plates. These plates dated in the 6th year of Simhavarman, register the gift of a village as Paḷḷiccandam to the Jaina teacher Vajranandi of Paruttikkunram. During this time Tirupparuttikunram was known as "Sri-varḍhamaneswara-Dharmatirtham". Divided opinions put forward about the date of the two Jaina temples (here local tradition assigns the construction of these temples) to a Pallava king, who constructed them at the request of two Jaina teachers who lived here. Late T. N. Ramachandran suggests that the Chandraprabha temple, one of these two, might have been built by Nandivarman Pallavamalla, while the other known as the Vardhamana temple belongs to a later period. But Dr. Nagaswamy questions the view of T. N. Ramachandran and he propounds that the credit of the construction of the Chandraprabha temple goes to Narasimhavarman II. The Vardhamana is notable for having series of Painting in the ceiling of the mandapa depicting scenes from the life of Tiruthankaras.

### **Buddhist Temples in Kanchipuram :**

No doubt, Kanchipuram also served as an important centre of Buddhism in the early times. The accounts of Hiuen Tsang, a Chinese traveller who visited India in the first half of the 7th century A.D. give a vivid and authoritative note on the Buddhism in India. During his visit to Kanchipuram, it flourished as an important centre of Buddhism and had more than 100 Buddhist monasteries. He also referred to that Asoka, the Mauryan Emperor constructed a stupa here. As at present, it must be conceded that there are practically no vestiges of Buddhism in Kanchi, except for a few Buddha Images, noticeable among them, two seated images, one in the Vasantha mandapa at Sri Kamakshi temple and another at Siva Kanchi police station. The Raja vihara, a Buddhist vihara in Kanchipuram mentioned in the matta-vilasaprahasana, a burlesque story written by Mahendravarman-I, is also not to be traced out at present.

# கரிசூழ்ந்தமங்கலம் திருக்கோயில்கள்

ஆ. வெ. அரங்காச்சாரி

“வட வேங்கடம், தென்குமரி

ஆயிரடைத் தமிழ் கூறும்நல்லுலகம்” என்று தமிழகத்தின் எல்லையைப் பணம்பாரனார் என்ற பழம் பெரும் புலவர் உணர்த்தி நிற்கிறார். தமிழ்நாட்டை நல் உலகம் என்றது ஏன்? ஆயிரமாயிரம் ஆண்டுகளாக அன்பும் அறனும் செறிந்து, பண்பும் பயனும் மலர வாழ்ந்து காட்டியும், நல்லவற்றை வகுத்துரைத்தும் வான்புகழ் கொண்ட சான்றோர்களை உலகினுக்குத் தந்தது இந்நாடு.

கோயில் மையம் : தமிழ்நாட்டுத் தொன்மையும், தட்ப வெப்பமும், சூழ்நிலையும், உணவும் சேர்ந்து மக்களை எளியவாழ்வின ராகவும், ஏற்றமிது பண்பினராகவும் ஆக்கிவிட்டன. அந்த மனப் பண்பின் சிகரமே இன்று தமிழகம் முழுவதும் வானளாவிய விமானங் களுடனும், கோபுரங்களுடனும் கோயில்களாக ஓங்கி உயர்ந்து உலக ரிய விளங்குகின்றன. அனைத்து மாநிலங்களிலும் உள்ள கோயில் களை எண்ணிக் கூட்டிப் பார்த்தாலும் தமிழகத்தில் உள்ள கோயில் களின் தொகைக்குக் குறைவே தான் என்பது முற்றிலும் உண்மை. இதனால் தான் மணிவாசகர் எந்நாட்டவருக்கும் இறைவனாக உள்ளவனை, ‘தென்னாடுடைய சிவன்’ என்றார்.

விண்ணகத் தேவரும் நண்ணவும் மாட்டாத விழுப் பொருள் மண்ணகத்தில் அர்ச்சாவதார மூர்த்தியாக ஆலயங்களில் வீற்றிருந்து அருள் பாலிக்கின்றது. மண்ணில் பிறந்து அவனை வணங்கினால் தான் முக்தி உண்டு என்பது உறுதி. புவனியில் போய் பிறவாமல் நாளை நாம் அவமே கழிக்கின்றோமே என்று விண்ணவர் வருந்துகின்றனர் என்றும், மலரவனும், திருமாலும் மனிதப் பிறவியில் விருப்பம் கொண்டனர் என்றும் மணிவாசகர் ‘புவனியில் போய் பிறவாமல்..... என்ற பள்ளி எழுச்சிப் பாடலில் மனமுருகிப் பாடுகிறார்.

திருப்பெருந்துறையில் மட்டுந்தான் இறைவன் எழுந்தரு ளினானா? இல்லை! இல்லை! எண்ணற்ற திருப்பதிகளுக்கு அவன் வந்தான்-நின்றான்-அமர்ந்தான்-கிடந்தான்-ஏன்? மக்களை வாழச் செய்யத்தான். இதையுணர்ந்து அவனைப் பாடிப் பரவி வாழ்ந்தால் நாம் பிறவிப்பயனை அடையலாம்.

திருநெல்வேலித் திருப்பதிகள் :-

திக்கெலாம் புகழும் திருநெல்வேலிச் சீமை வீரத்தின் விளைநிலம் மட்டுமன்று, ஆன்மீகப்பயிரும் இங்கு நன்றாகச் செழித்துள்ளது. இந்து சமயத்தின் இரு கண்களான சைவமும், வைணவமும் கை சேர்த்து உலவிவரும் மாவட்டம் இது. விண்ணை முட்டும் கோபுரங் களுடன் திகழும் ஆலயங்கள் ஆயிரக் கணக்கில் இங்கே உள்ளன.

“திங்கள்முடி சூடுமலை தென்றல்விளை யாடும்மலை  
தங்கவயல் சூழும்மலை தமிழ்முனிவன் வாழும்மலை  
அங்கயற்கண் அம்மைதிரு வருள்கரந்து பொழிவதெனப்  
பொங்கருவி தூங்குமலை பொதிகைமலை என்மலையே”

என்று மீனாட்சியம்மை குறத்தில் குமரகுருபர அடிகள் பாடியவாறு, பொதிகையிலிருந்து வீழும் அருவி ‘தண் பெருநதை’ என்ற பெயருடன் ஆறாகி அகத்திய முனிவரின் ஆசியுடன் நெல்லை மாவட்டத்தை வாழச் செய்கிறது. இத் தண் பெருநதைக் கரையில் ஒன்பது கயிலைப்பதிகளும், ஒன்பது திருமால் திருப்பதிகளும் உள்ளன - இவை விழுப் புகழ் பெற்றவை. பாவநாசம், சேரன்மகா தேவி, கோடகநல்லூர், குன்றத்தூர், முரப்பநாடு, திருவைகுந்தம், தென்திருப்பேரை, இராசபதி, பூமங்கலம் என்ற ஒன்பதும் உமையம் மையுடன் கயிலை நாதர் வீற்றிருக்கும் திருக்கயிலாயப்பதிகள் ஆகின்றன.

திருவைகுந்தம், வரகுணமங்கை, திருப்புளிங்குடி, திருக் குளந்தை, துலைவில்லிமங்கலம், தென்திருப்பேரை, திருக்கோளூர், ஆழ்வார்திருநகரி ஆகியவை ஒன்பது திருமால் திருப்பதிகளாம். சுவாமி நம்மாழ்வாரரால் மங்களா சாஸனம் செய்யப்பட்ட திருத்தலங் கள் இவை. 108 வைணவத்திருப்பதிகளில் இடம் பெற்றவை.

கரிசூழ்ந்த மங்கலம்:-

இத் திருத்தலங்கள் தவிர இன்னும் எண்ணற்றவை அழகுடன் மிளிர்ந்து கொண்டிருக்கின்றன. அரியும், சிவனும் இணைந்து ஆட்சிபுரியும் ஆலயங்கள் ஏராளம். தனித்தனியாக வீற்றிருந்து அருள் பாலிக்கும் கோயில்களும் பல. இத்தகைய பல்வேறு பதிக ளுள்ளும் ஓங்கு புகழ் பெற்ற திருப்பதி கரிசூழ்ந்த மங்கலம் என்ற வளமான பதி. அதன் பெருமைகளை சுண்டுக் காணலாம்.

திருநெல்வேலியிலிருந்து சுமார் 15 கல் தொலைவில் பத்தமடை கிராமத்திற்கு மிக அருகில் கரிசூழ்ந்த மங்கலம் கிராமம் எழில் மிகுந்த தாகத் திகழ்கின்றது. தண்பெருநதைக் கரையில் உள்ளது. பசுமை

யான வயல்களும், சோலைகளும், கோயில்களும் நிறைந்து விளங்கும் ஊர் இது. கல்விமான்கள் இங்கு அதிக அளவில் இருந்தனர்.

பாண்டிய மன்னர்கள் காலத்தில் யானைப்படையின் ஒருபகுதி நீர்வனம் - நிலவனம் கருதி இவ்வூரில் வைக்கப்பட்டிருக்கிறது. கரும்புத் தோட்டங்கள் இங்கு ஏராளமாக இருந்தன. யானைகள் ஊர் முழுவதும் சூழ்ந்து திரிந்து வந்ததால் 'கரிசூழ்ந்த மங்கலம்' என்ற பெயர் இவ்வூருக்கு ஏற்பட்டிருக்கிறது. இவ்வூரில் சுமார் மூவாயிரம் மக்கள் வசிக்கின்றனர். மிகச்சிறந்த விவசாயிகள், பல் வேறு இனத்தவர்-ஒற்றுமையுடன் வாழ்கின்றனர். ஊர் சிறியதாக இருந்தாலும் ஆலயங்கள் மிகுதியாக இருக்கின்றன. அருள்மிகு கனக சபாபதி திருக்கோயில், அருள்மிகு வேங்கடாசலபதி திருக்கோயில், ஸ்ரீ காளஹஸ்தீஸ்வரர் திருக்கோயில், சுடலை மரட கவாமி கோயில், கரிசூழ்ந்த நங்கை அம்மன் கோயில், கிருஷ்ணன் கோயில், வீரநாயகர் கோயில் என்று பல்வேறு ஆலயங்கள் ஊரை அலங்கரிக்கின்றன. வயல்களின் நடுவில் கரிசூழ்ந்த நங்கை அம்மன் கோயில் உள்ளது. இந்த அம்மனின் பெயரால் இவ்வூர் கரிசூழ்ந்த மங்கலம் என்றழைக்கப்பட்டது என்பதும் பொருத்தமே.

#### 1. அருள்மிகு கனக சபாபதி திருக்கோயில்

சுமார் மூவாயிரம் ஆண்டுகளுக்கு முன்பு பாண்டிய மன்னர்களால் கட்டப் பட்ட திருக்கோயில் இது. கனக சபாபதிக்குரிய பஞ்சஸ்தலங்களில் இதுவும் ஒன்று. கருவேலன்குளம், கட்டாரிமங்கலம், செப்பரை, சிதம்பரம், கரிசூழ்ந்தமங்கலம் ஆகிய ஐந்தும் பஞ்சஸ்தலங்களாம். இந்த ஐந்து தலங்களில் உள்ள நடராஜர் விக்கிரஹம் பஞ்சலோகங்களாலானவை. காண்போரைக் கவர்ந்திழுக்கும் வண்ணம் அமைந்தவை. இந்த ஐந்து விக்கிரஹங்களையும் செய்து கொடுத்தவர் கருவேலன்குளம் வள்ளிநாயகம் ஸ்தபதி மரபினர்கள் என்று கூறுவார்கள். இந்த ஆலயம் இடைக் காலத்தில் தோன்றியிருக்க வேண்டும். பாண்டிய மன்னர்களால் கட்டப்பட்டது என்பதை நிரூபிக்கும் வகையில் கல்தூண்களிலும், உத்தரங்களிலும் மீன் சின்னங்கள் அதிக அளவில் பொறிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளன. சுந்தரபரண்டியன் காலத்தில் கட்டப்பட்டிருக்கலாம் என்று ஊகிக்க முடிகிறது. இராஜகோபுரம் இல்லை - விமானம் மட்டும் உள்ளது. முயலகன் மீது சுவாமி கனக சபாபதி ஆனந்தத் தாண்டவம் ஆடுகின்றார். கம்பீரமான அழகொழுகும் விக்கிரஹம் - அன்னை சிவகாமி அருகில் பொலிவுடன் நிற்கிறார். முழுமையான செம்புத்திருமேனி-ஒரே வார்ப்பு- திருவாதிரைத் திருவிழாவில் மட்டும் சுவாமி உலாவருகிறார்.

மார்கழிமாதம் பத்து நாட்கள் சிறப்பாகத் திருவாதிரை விழா

நடத்துகின்றனர். கட்டளைதார்கள் பக்தியுடன் வழிபாடுகள் செய்கின்றனர். சிறு தேரும் உள்ளது பல்வேறு வாகனங்கள் உள்ளன. கிளி, மயில், ரிஷபவாகனம், சப்பரம் போன்றவை உள்ளன. ஊரின் ஈசான்ய பாகத்தில் இந்த ஆலயம் அமைந்துள்ளது.

“வேதங்கள் ஆட, மிகு ஆகமம் ஆட, கீதங்கள் ஆட, கிளர் அண்டம் ஏழும் ஆட, பூதங்கள் ஆட, புவனம் முழுதும் ஆட நாதம் கொண்டு ஆடினான் ஞானானந்தக் கூத்தே” என்ற திருமுல்ரின் திருக்கூத்துத் தரிசன வரிகளைப் படிக்குந்தோறும் இறைவன் ஆடிய பேரானந்த ஆடலை, இருவிழி எதிரில் இதயம் குளிரப் பார்ப்பது போலவே, உணர்வுகள் நெகிழ்ந்து உள்ளம் குழைகிறது. ஆகமங்களும், புராணங்களும் போட்டியிட்டுக் கொண்டு விளக்கும் இத் தாண்டவர் கோலங்களைக் கோல்யிகளில் சிற்பங்களாகவும், செப்புத் திருமேனிகளாகவும் படைத்து, அந்த இலக்கிய வரிகளுக்கு வடிவம் தந்து மகிழ்ந்தனர் தமிழகத்துப் பெரு மன்னர்கள். ஏழென்றும், ஒன்பதென்றும், பதினொன்று என்றும் வகைப்படுத்தப்படும் தாண்டவங்களுள் ஆனந்தத் தாண்டவம் தலையானது. இன்று தமிழகத்தில் ஆலயங்களில் நாம் தரிசிக்கும் ஆட வல்லான் படிமங்கள் ஆனந்தத் தாண்டவக் கோலத்தில் தான் அமைக்கப்பட்டுள்ளன. ஐந்து தொழில்களையும் ஆண்டவன் ஒரு சேர இயற்றுகின்ற ஆடலமைப்பு இது வென்று உண்மை விளக்கப் பாடல்கள் வழிகாட்டுகின்றன.

கரிசூழ்ந்த மங்கலத்தில் சுவாமி கனக சபாபதிக்குத்தான் முக்கியத்துவம் உண்டு. அனுக்ளை விநாயகர் முன்மண்டபத்தில் இருக்கிறார். விழா நாட்களில் இவர் முன்னிலையில் தான் சங்கல்பம் தொடங்குவார்கள். மூலவமூர்த்தி ஸ்ரீ சுந்தரேஸ்வரர். அம்பாள் சுந்தரமூர்த்தி. அம்பாளுக்குப் பிராகாரத்தில் தனியாக ஆலயம் உள்ளது. தெற்குப் பிராகாரத்தில் ஜீரதேவர் மூர்த்தி உள்ளது. தக்ஷிணா மூர்த்தியும் காட்சி தருகிறார். மேல் பிராகாரத்தில் அம்பாள் கன்னிவிநாயகரும், சுவாமி கன்னி விநாயகரும், வள்ளி தெய்வயானையுடன் முருகப் பெருமானும் அமர்ந்துள்ளனர். வடக்குப் பிராகாரத்தில் சனீஸ்வரர், சண்டிகேஸ்வரர் மூர்த்திகள் உள்ளன. சுவாமி மண்டபத்தில் நவக்கிரஹங்கள் பிரதிஷ்டை செய்யப்பட்டுள்ளன. ஈசான்ய பாகத்தில் பைரவர் உள்ளார். சுவாமிக்கு எதிரில் நந்திதேவர் கம்பீரமாக உள்ளார். முன் முகப்பில் கொடி மரமும், பலி பீடமும் முறைப்படி அமைந்துள்ளன. தென்பாகத்தில் பூரணபுஷ்கலாம்பா ஸமேத சாஸ்தாவின் திருவுருவம் உள்ளது. அபிஷேகமண்டபமும் உள்ளது.

கார்த்திகை மாதம் கடைசி சோமவாரத்தன்று நந்தி தேவருக்கு முழுக்காப்புச் சாத்துகின்றனர். இத்திருக்கோவில் விக்கிரகங்கள்



காமிக்காமத்தைச் சேர்ந்தவை. முறைப்படி தயாரிக்கப்பட்டவை. இந்து சமய அறநிலைய ஆட்சித்துறையின் கீழ் இக்கோயில் இயங்குகின்றது. வருமானம் சுமாராக இருக்கிறது. சிவாசாரியர் ஸ்ரீ அய்யம் பட்டர் ஈடுபாட்டுடன் பூசைகளைநன்கு நடத்தி வருகிறார்.

## 2. தாமிர வருணிக்கரைப் பெருமாள் கோவில்:

“தாமிர வருணி மாகாத்மியம்” என்ற நூலில் இந்த ஆலயம் சிறப்பாக வருணிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது. தாமிரவருணி ஆற்றின் நடுவில் இந்த ஆலயம் அமைந்துள்ளது. ரேரமச மகரிஷி இக்கோவிலில் ஸ்ரீ சுதர்ஸன மகாவிஷ்ணுவையும், சுவாமி யோக நரசிம்மரையும் பிரதிஷ்டை செய்திருக்கிறார். இங்குள்ள தீர்த்தக் கட்டம் ரேரமச மகரிஷி தீர்த்தம் ஆகும். பாபநாசத்திலிருந்து இது 63 ஆவது தீர்த்தக் கட்டமாகும். பழமையான தோற்றப் பொலிவுடன் ஆலயம் திகழ்கின்றது.

பின்புறம் மேற்கு நோக்கி யோக நரசிம்மர் நான்கு கைகளிலும் சக்கரத்துடனும், முன்புறம் ஸ்ரீ சுதர்ஸன மூர்த்தி 16 கைகளுடன் ஒரு காலை முன்வைத்து ஓடிவருவது போல் காட்சி தருகிறார். ஒரே வட்டக் கல்லால் சுமார் 3½ அடி உயர வட்ட வடிவில் இந்த மூர்த்தி விளங்குகின்றார். கண்ணாடியில்தான் யோக நரசிம்மரைக் கர்ப்பூர ஹாரத்தியின் போது அழகாகத் தரிசிக்கலாம். நேபாளத்தில் மட்டும் இதே போன்ற அமைப்பில் மூர்த்தி உள்ளதாகக் கூறுவர். பாரதத்தில் வேறு எங்கும் இத்தகைய மூர்த்தி இல்லை.

திருவரங்கம், ஸ்ரீவில்லிபுத்தூர் போன்ற தலங்களில் சக்கரத் தாழ்வார்மூர்த்தி இருந்தாலும் கரிகுழந்தமங்கலம் ஸ்ரீ சுதர்ஸன மூர்த்தியின் அமைப்பு அற்புதமானது. அங்கெல்லாம் உள்ள மூர்த்தியின் இருகைகளில் சங்கு சக்கரமும் உண்டு. இருகைகள் முட்டிற்குமேல் இருக்கும். ஆனால் இங்கு மூர்த்தியின் நான்கு கைகளிலும் சக்கரம் காணப்படுவது அபூர்வமான காட்சியாகும்.

நம்பூதிரிகள் ஆயிரம் ஆண்டுகள் பூஜை செய்துள்ளனர். மலையாள நாட்டு மடரதிபதி சன்னியாசி இக்கோயிலைக் கட்டியுள்ளார் என்று தெரிகிறது. இந்த மண் சன்னியாசி மண் என்று அழைக்கப்படுகிறது. கல்வெட்டுக்கள் பலமொழிகளில் காணப்படுகின்றன. மணி மண்டபத்திற்கு முன்பாக உள்ள படியில் “கல்யாண சாய்க்கும் சதாசேவை” என்று தமிழில் செதுக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது. கோவில் பிரகாரத்தில் ஒரு தூணில் திரிதண்டத்துடன் கூடிய சன்னியாசியின் வடிவம் செதுக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது. நெற்றியில் திருமண் இல்லை. அதனால் மலையாளி என ஊகிக்க முடிகிறது.

புகழ் மிக்க இந்தப் பெருமானைக் குலதெய்வமாகக் கொண்டவர்கள் ஏராளமாக உள்ளனர். குவையத் முதல் குமரி வரை பக்தர்கள் உள்ளனர். ஆண்டு தோறும் வந்து வழிபட்டுச் செல்கின்றனர்.

உத்ஸவ மூர்த்தி ஸ்ரீ சுதர்ஸன மகாலிஷ்ணு அலர்மேல் மங்காஸமேத சுவாமி வெங்கடாசலபதி கம்பீரமாகச் சேவை சாதிக்கிறார். தினசரி ஏராளமான பக்தர்கள் நதியில் நீராடி இறைவனை வழிபட்டுச் செல்கின்றனர். அவ்வப்போது சிறப்பு வழிபாடுகள் நடக்கின்றன. பக்தர்கள் பரயசம் நிவேதனம் செய்து வழிபாடு செய்கின்றனர். புரட்டாசி மாதம் சனிக்கிழமைகளில் கருடோத்ஸவம் மிகச் சிறப்பாக நடக்கிறது. இக்கோவிலில் முதலில் கொடிமரமும், பின்புறம் பலிபீடமும் உள்ளதால் மலையாள நம்பூதரிகள்தான் 1000 ஆண்டுகள் பூஜை செய்திருப்பார்கள் என்று கருத இடமளிக்கிறது. இது மலையாள சம்பிரதாயம். பறக்கை மதுசூதனப்பெருமாள் கோயிலில் இப்படித்தான் உள்ளது.

இப்பெருமாள் கோவிலின் முன்புறம் உள்ள பாழான சின்னங்களைக் கொண்டு ஒருகாலத்தில் கிராமம், அக்கிரஹாரம் இங்கு தான் இருந்திருக்க வேண்டும் என்று உறுதியாகக் கூற முடிகிறது. தாழிகள், மண்சட்டிகள், உடைந்த களிமண் சட்டிகள், இடிந்த கட்டிடங்கள் உள்ளதால் இக்கோவிலை ஒட்டியே ஊர் இருந்திருக்கலாம் என்று உணர முடிகிறது. தற்சமயம் ஊர் தென்புறம் ஒதுங்கி விட்டது. சித்திரை விஷி, நரசிம்ம ஜயந்தி, புரட்டாசி மாதம் சனிக்கிழமைகள், ஐப்பசி விஷி, திருவோணம், வைகுண்ட ஏகாதசி, ஆடி சுவாதி, திருப்பள்ளி எழுச்சி போன்ற விழாக்கள் சிறப்பாக நடக்கின்றன.

அற்புதமாகக் காட்சி தரும் இந்த அழகிய சிங்கரைத் தரிசிக்க அடிக்கடி யாத்திரீகர்கள் வருகின்றனர். இந்துசமய அறநிலைய ஆட்சித்துறையின் நிர்வாகத்தில் இந்த ஆலயம் உள்ளது. நாள் தோறும் இரண்டு கால பூசைகள் காலை 6-00 மணி முதல் 9-00 மணி வரையிலும், மாலை 4-00 மணி முதல் 6-00 மணி வரையிலும் நடக்கின்றன.

கெருட வாகனம், சப்பரங்கள், சேஷ வாகனம் போன்றவை உள்ளன. கோவிலை யடுத்து ஆறு பாய்கிறது. அமைதியான சூழ்நிலையில் அற்புதமான காட்சி கண்களுக்கு விருந்தாகிறது.

### 3. ஸ்ரீ காளஹஸ்தீஸ்வரர் திருக்கோவில்

தாமிரவருணிக்கரையில் உள்ள அழகான கோவில் இது. கோடக நல்லூர் சரகத்தைச் சேர்ந்தது. தாமிரவருணி மாகாத்தியத்தில் இடம்

பெற்றுள்ளது. மூலவர் மட்டுமே உள்ளார். அப்பாள் ஞானரம்பிகை. இக்கோவில் தான் ஆகிகாலத்துக் கோவில் என்பதற்கான சான்றுகள் உள்ளன. ஒரு காலத்தில் கிராமம் இங்குதான் இருந்திருக்க வேண்டும் என்று ஊகிக்க இடம் உண்டு. செக்குகள்/தாழிகள்/இடிந்த கட்டிடங்கள் காணப்படுகின்றன. ரோமச் மகரிஷியால் பிரதிஷ்டை செய்யப்பட்டுள்ள ஆலயம் இது. எளிய ஆலயம் இது. தற்சமயம் ஸ்ரீ சங்கரய்யர் என்பவர் நல்ல முறையில் பூசை செய்து வருகிறார்.

#### 4. சுடலை மாட சுவாமி திருக்கோவில்

தண்பொருதைக் கரையில் ஊரின் மேல் பாகத்தில் சுடலை மாட சுவாமி கோவில் அமைந்துள்ளது. தாமிர வருணி மாகாத்மிய நூலில் இடம் பெற்ற ஆலயம் இது. மிகவும் வரிதியான தெய்வம். ஊர் மக்களுக்கெல்லாம் குலதெய்வம். ஆண்டுதோறும் சிறப்பாகக் கொடை விழா நடைபெறுகிறது. இஸ்லாமியர்களும் வந்து வழிபடுகின்றனர். தினசரி பூசைகள் நடைபெறுகின்றன. வெள்ளி, செவ்வாய் நாட்களில் சிறப்பு வழிபாடு நடக்கின்றது. இந்த சுவாமியைக் குலதெய்வமாகக் கொண்டவர்கள் பலர் வெளியூர்களில் வாழ்கின்றனர். அவ்வப்போது வந்து வழிபாடு செய்கின்றனர். கொடைத் திருவிழாவில் பக்கத்துக் கிராம மக்கள் திரளாகக் கூடுகின்றனர். வில்லிசை சிறப்பாக நடத்தப்படுகிறது. ஊரின் காவல் தெய்வமாக இதைப் போற்றுகின்றனர். பெருமாள் கோவிலின் பின்புறம் மேல் பாகத்தில் இந்த ஆலயம் அமைந்துள்ளது.

#### 5. ஸ்ரீ கிருஷ்ணன் கோவில்

ஸ்ரீ கனக சபாபதி கோவிலை ஒட்டியுள்ள மாடவீதியில் ஸ்ரீ நவநீத கிருஷ்ணஸ்வாமி திருக்கோவில் உள்ளது. ஸ்ரீ கிருஷ்ணருடைய மூர்த்தி அழகாக வடிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது. இரண்டு கைகளிலும் வெண்ணெய் ஏந்தியவாறு கிருஷ்ணன் காட்சி தருகின்றார். சிறிய அழகான ஆலயம். விசேட நாட்களில் மக்கள் திரளாக வந்து தரிசிக்கின்றனர்.

இந்த ஆலயங்கள் தவிர வேறுசில அம்மன் கோவில்களும், விநாயகர் கோயில்களும் இருக்கின்றன. ஊர் சிற்றூராக இருந்தாலும் ஏராளமான ஆலயங்கள் ஊர் முழுதும் நிறைந்துள்ளன. வயல்களின் நடுவில் அன்னை கரிசூழ்ந்த நங்கை அம்மன் ஆலயம் மிகவும் அழகாக அமைந்துள்ளது. தாமிரவருணி மகாத்மியத்தில் இதைப் பற்றிய குறிப்பு உண்டு. நடராஜன், கரிசூழ்ந்தான் என்ற பெயர் கொண்டவர்கள் இவ்வூரில் பலர் உள்ளனர். இறைவன் பெயரைச் சூட்டிக் கொள்வதில் தானே பெருமையுள்ளது!

முடிவுரை

“அடைந்தோர் பாவம் வெளவிடு பொருதை” என்று திருவிளையாடற்புராணத்தில் பரஞ்சோதி முனிவர் குறிப்பிட்டவாறு தண்பொருதையாறு தனிச் சிறப்புக் கொண்டது. அதன் கரையில் எண்ணற்ற ஆலயங்கள் சிறப்புடன் திகழ்ந்து கொண்டிருக்கின்றன. மூர்த்தி-தலம்-தீர்த்தம் இம் மூன்றும் நிறைந்து திகழும் வளமானபதி கரிசூழ்ந்த மங்கலம் ஆகும்.

# **Popular Gods as seen from Sculpture in the Temples of Tamil Nadu**

**Rama Narayanan**

The keynote of Indian culture is unity in diversity. The term culture, by its very definition, is localized and restricted to an area and a group of people. Hence, it is not surprising that the vast extent of Bharatavarsha possesses a rich and variegated cultural heritage. Yet the regional variety is bound together by certain common factors which govern and regulate the religion, and art of the people; the social pattern and the lifestyle.

Religion is a major aspect of any culture. The standard of a culture depends to a great extent on the ideas of faith and practice of religion. The religion may be cult or esoteric practices. It may range from primitive ideas to highly evolved spiritual and intellectual concepts. Following the abrupt end of Harappa Civilization in India, the intruders instituted, in the Vedic Period, the living Hindu Religion that is practiced to this day. In its long history, there were times when Hinduism ebbed low, while sometimes it sailed in high tide, the important factor being without loss of its essential character.

The thirtythree Vedic Gods have multiplied into a complex and elaborate Hindu pantheon, tolerantly absorbing new ideas and assimilating local beliefs. Hinduism resulted from the synthesis of the Vedic, sacrificial religion of the Aryans and the Agamic and ritualistic practices of the Dravidians. The former was abstract and based on 'pasukarma' which involved animal sacrifice. 'Pushpakarma' no the offering of leaves, flowers, sandal paste, milk etc. were the direct rituals of the latter. The two combined imperceptibly and without loss of their essence, Such a complex and pantheistic religion was bound to have shifts of interest towards one or the other of the deities. Nevertheless, Hinduism is classified into two major sects of Vaishnavism and Saivism, the third of the

Trinity, Brahma being denied formal worship. The popularity of one or the other deity was governed by political and socio-economic set up of the society, the local preferences and very often on the tastes of the royal patrons. Each individual has freedom to choose his deity of worship, which is an extraordinary fact of Hinduism.

Art is generally the material expression of any culture and as such direct visual documentation of the religion and religious practices. It is claimed that 'art is the handmaid of religion'. But in India art is not only the handmaid of religion but religion itself. Religion is interwoven with the very fabric of existence. Moreover, the very nature of Hinduism demands visual expression. The fact that Hindus are idolators created a need for objects of worship. Indian art is idealistic and religious and so symbolic and conventional. A peep into the past would reveal an emphasis on religious architecture and religious art; secular architecture had no significance in Indian art until the Muslim intrusion. Temples were glorious structures of acclaim to the kings while their own palaces were just secondary in comparison. The practice of arts of worship by itself, complete in itself. A weaver or potter, by weaving a fabric or throwing a pot is practising his religion. Thus the practice of arts is in a nutshell Yoga.

Hinduism encouraged and demanded objects of worship. These objects may range from nature-objects to highly imaginative, fantastic icons. The objects of worship include icons of deities, saligramas or banalingas, yantras, sepulchres of saints, certain animals, birds, trees, rivers-the range is flabberghasting indeed.

The function of art was to transform the abstract ideologies and spiritual powers into recognizable and rather familiar representation. This was successfully achieved by use of symbols. Image worship was in common from the time of 'yakhas' in the 3rd Century B.C. Buddha was worshipped as image by his followers after his death. 'The employment of an external object to concentrate the mind upon in the act of meditation in carrying on the practice of yoga is in India is quite as old as yoga itself.' Patanjali refers to the 'Process of fixing the

mind on some object well defined in space.' (Gopinatha Rao, Elements of Hindu Iconography). In the 6th Century B.C. Pānini writes, "likenesses not to be sold but used for the purpose of livelihood do not take the termination kan" - Here the 'unsellable reproduction or pratikriti is taken to be the reference to divine images. Ramayana mentions temples in Lanka (Bk. VI, 39, 21) - an evidence to the fact that there existed at least in South India the worship of images enshrined in the temples.

'The religion of Veda knows no idols The worship of idols in India is a secondary formation, a later degeneration of the more primitive worship of ideal Gods' - says Max Muller. Images are distillation of abstract ideas to visual representation, easily understood by men. In that process as Dr. Bollenson explains, "The Indians did not merely in imagination assign human forms to their Gods, but also represented them in a sensible manner" A quotation from Nirukta is interesting. "We are now to consider the forms of Gods. One mode of representation in the hymn makes them resemble men; for they are praised and addressed as intelligent being. They are also celebrated with limbs such as those of men". The scriptures gave the guidelines of image making in more than one way-by description in hymns and by prescription in Shastras.

In pantheistic character of Hindu religion and the liberty to choose the object of worship endowed an unbelievable diversity to the sculptural representation of Gods and Goddesses. Thus the figural idiom were conceived not only for the major gods of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva but even the planets and the vahanas. Some times, even the ayudhas were personified. According to the nature and power, the deities were endowed with superhuman elements with retention of basic human form. More number of heads and hands result from this. Composite forms of zoomorphic-anthropomorphic and male - female forms evolved. They are fantastic creations, powerful yet enigmatic. The various deities of the pantheon were also assigned vahanas and ayudhas which helped the rendering of the deities and identify them later. The asanas (postures) and mudras (gestures) denoted the mood or aspect of the deity. The benevolent Gods were the shantamurti or saumya

and in wrath an icon is referred to as ugra or raudramurti. An image can be an anugrahamurti or a samharamurti.

Generally the image that is installed in the garbhagriha should not be moved and called mulabhera or dhruvabhera. They are customarily carved in stone or sometimes in wood. The utsavamurti are the smaller icons in metal, to be carried in procession.

The postures may be standing, seated or sleeping, (sthanaka, asana or sayana respectively) each worshipped for a particular purpose. Vaishnavite images are accordingly classified into yogo, bhoga, vira and abhicharika. The standing image is worshiped for spiritual realization (purpose is yoga); the worship of seated images brings forth material benefits and enjoyment (bhoga) while the sleeping images fulfill the desires of military prowess (vira). Abhicharika are images worshipped for inflicting defect and death to the enemies, as such it is inauspicious and unfit for popular worship in towns and villages. The temples for abhicharika images are erected by kings in fortresses, marshy lands or forests. Linga is the most favoured symbol of worship among Saivites-probably the 'pillar of fire' merged with cult beliefs and assumed the phallic form - the linga. Apart from the images of worship the shrines and temples often boasted very many representations of other deities as sculptural decoration and carrying metaphysical meaning.

The measurements and proportion of each and every deity was formulated, too. All the details were compiled in shastras as guide for creating the images of worship, or representing divine or semi divine forces. Hindu art, no wonder is symbolic and conventional in character.

The canonical regimentation of temple architecture and religious sculpture also unified the diverse cultural and regional variations of the land. So no knowledgeable Hindu travelling across the country is baffled or confused by his visits to the local temples and shrines. In this respect it is necessary to mention that the Shastras were compiled in early Medieval Period and that very many Sanskrit Shastras were Tamilized in the twelfth century. One would expect such canonical restrictions would hamper the



creative outlet and undermine the aesthetic value. There is a danger of monotonous repetition and mechanical representation. Curiously, except for some rare instances the art of temple sculpture was alive, exemplifying the creative genius of the artisans. Pride in craftsmanship and absence of objective - subject duality kept the Indian art alive and almost perfect. The religious art was never pursued for personal glory of the artisans, hence the anonymity. No names of sthapathis are known in certainty through evidences prove that they were held in high esteem in society. The kings recorded their contribution to temple building because it was considered a meritorious act on par with acts of valour in the battle. There is pronounced neglect on secular architecture even by the great monarchs till very late in Indian art, almost till the contact of India with Muslims.

The basic facts concerning the representation of Gods and Goddess have been outlined to facilitate the study of "The Popular Gods as seen from the Sculpture in the Temples of Tamil Nadu", apart from the deity enshrined.

From the hoary past of Megalithic Culture, through Sangam Age to the Post Vijayanagara Period of 17th Century, History of the Tamils is replete with details of highly civilized, efflorescent culture. Tamil heritage is long and fertile. Yet from the point of view of temple arts because of the availability of material evidence, the founding of Pallava Empire would make a fitting starting point. The topic chosen combines various aspects of Temple Arts the norms of sculpture in Tamil Nadu, the mode of representing the Gods and Goddess, the architectural layout of the temples, the close association of temple building to its sculptural scheme and the stylistic evolution. My approach to this subject, I humbly state, is from the point of view of art and art history. My knowledge of Tamil Literature being Limited, I acknowledge my inadequacy to flaunt the incredibly beautiful verses to support the ideas concluded. Nevertheless references from Tamil literature would be used to emphasize or highlight certain points.

The oldest reference to the practice of 'worship of images enshrined in temples' in South India is found in Ramayana,

amidst the description of temples in Lanka. The oldest piece of idol in South India is a linga from Gudimallam. 'From the features of the figure of the Siva carved thereon in half relief, from the ornaments worked out on the figure, from the arrangement of drapery, from the battle axe upon the shoulder' and many other characteristics, it may be put down to belong to the period of Bharhut Sculpture, that is, second century before Christ. This remarkable piece of sculpture is interesting in two ways; it at once assures us of the exact nature of early linga worship and also affords us a lower limit of time in relation to the worship of Siva in the form of linga. From this linga worship is at least as old as second century B.C." Thus writes M.A. Gopinath Rao in his "Elements of Hindu Iconography". If one accepts the theory that the 'Dasyus'-the native of Bharatavarsha driven south by the Aryans of Central Asian origin are Dravidians and that these natives were the original inhabitants of the reputed Harappan Civilization, a few interesting facts could be connected. The knowledge concerning religious practice of the Harappans is vague awaiting the deciphering of the script. But the seals are helpful in formulating certain theories in this respect. An interesting seal represents a 'God-head' — a horned man seated in yogic pose surrounded by four animals namely a tiger, an elephant, a rhinoceros and a buffalo. The figure is unmistakably a representation of 'Pasupati'—the Lord of the Beasts—an aspect of Siva. This seal testifies the worship of Siva as early as third millennium B.C. and by the Dravidians at that. Evidently the 'Dasyus' brought their favourite God down south. Curiously, the linga sculpture from Gudimallam, though a figural and not a phallic symbol in full is once again a form of Siva. A survey of the sculpture in the temples throw much light on the Gods favoured at different times. Apart from the deity to whom the temple is dedicated, the sculptural ornamentation comprise, to a great extent figural representation of Hindu Pantheon. A chronological sequence is helpful in studying the shifts of priorities to different images through the centuries.

Historically the cultural evolution of South India is divided into five periods. The Pallavas founded by Simhavishnu ruled from 600 A.D. to 900 A.D. They were succeeded by the Cholas

who held sovereignty till 1353 A.D. Pandyas rose to power in 1100 A.D. and fell along with Cholas in 1350 A.D. Accession of Vijayanagara power ruling from Hampi is said to be in 1335 A.D. They protected the peninsula from the Islamic invaders till 1565 A.D. Following the defeat of the Vijayanagar Empire the large extensive kingdom broke into minor kingdoms under Nayakas, the provincial generals of the mighty empire. This era is referred to variedly as Nayaka Period or Post Vijayanagara Period. Of these the first two dynasties of Pallavas and Cholas play a major role in formulating and popularising the religious practices.

Mahendravarman, second in line of the Pallava kings was a Jain turned Saivite; his conversion effected by the great Saivite saint Appar. Mahendravarman was a devout; an enthusiastic art patron. Moreover he was the 'tiger among artists' and 'curious minded' as two of his many titles 'Chitrakkarapuli' and 'Vichitra Chitta' testify. Triggered by the hectic temple building activity of his rival, the Chalukyas of Badami, Mahendravarman launched extensive experimentation in temple building. The rock hewn temples of Chalukyas of Badami were inspired by the expansive Buddhist, Hindu and Jain excavations in the Western ghats — at Ajanta and Ellora. They in turn provided models for the early religious temples in the arid and rocky kingdom of Pallavas. Notwithstanding the extreme hardness of the granite gneiss, as against the much softer trapp stone of his rival country, Mahendravarman excavated a series of ten cave temples or shrines in Tondaimandalam. They are Lakshita's cave temples at Mandagapattu Pancha Pandava Cave temple at Pallavaram, Rudravalisem cave temple at Mamandur, Kal mandapam cave temple at Kuranganil-muttam, Vasantheswaram cave temple at Vallam, Mahendra's Vishnu cave temple at Mahendravadi, Saturnmalla cave temple at Dalavanur, Lalithankura's cave temple at Trichirapalli, Avanibhajana cave temple at Siyamangalam and Pancha Pandava cave temple at Vilappakkam. Mahendravarman broke the taboo on stone for the building of temples by these excavations. In Tamil culture stone was associated with death. The hero-stones and the surviving monuments of Megalithic Culture reflect the funerary character of the culture peculiar to the South. Sangam literature bears testimony to the funerary practices based on the devotion and veneration of the dead. 'Nadukal' means 'the erected stone sepulchral

and commemorative'. The dead person becoming Nadukal is referred to in Puram, Pattupattu and Silappadikaram. Tholkappiyam defines ;

Katchi kalkol nirpadai nadukal  
Sirtakku sirappin perumpadai valthal (Porul 2.5)  
காட்சி கல்கோள் நீர்ப்படை நடுகல்  
சீர்த்தகு சிறப்பின் பெரும்படை வாழ்த்தல்.

'Kalleduppu' or 'Kalloonal' is an important rite in Tamil death ritual in practice to this day. Virakkal or here stones reflect similar sepulchral practice and is mentioned in Tamil literature. In view of such staunch taboo on use of stone for religious practice, Mahendra-varman's declaration on his first cave temple at Mandagapattu gains significance. The inscription reads,

Elād-an-iṣṭakam-a-druma(m-a-l-0)  
ham-a-Sudham (Vicitrachī) ttena  
nirmmapitām-nripe (na) Brahma-E-  
Svara-Visnu-Lakshit ayatanam.

'This brickless, timberless, metalless, mortarless abode of Lakshita was caused to be made by King Vichitrachitta for Buahma, Isvara an Vishnu. The breakthrough was not complete since all the cave temples are devoid of image of worship in the sanctuary. Evidently he could not instal an image of worship in stone. The empty shrines deprive us of direct knowledge of imagery of Gods at this period. The inscriptions throw light on the details of dedication. Most of these cave temples are named after the patron, boasting his birudas. The earliest at Mandagapattu is dedicated to the Trinity. 'Brahm-Eswara Vishnu'. Shrines Dedicated to Vishnu and Siva is evident from these inscriptions.

Apart from the taboo, the extreme hardness of the material and the lack of experience in working in stone discouraged sculputral ornamentation. Siva Gangadhara on the side wall of Lalithankura cave temple at Trichirapalli and miniature representation dancing Siva on the saduram of the pillar in Avanibhajana cave temple at Siyamangalam confirm the Saivite leaning. They are proofs also of the interest evoked by the different aspects of Siva. The tolerance of the patron is evident by the temples he dedicated to Vishnu and Trimurti.

The cave temples are modest shrines with a mandapam or pillared hall in front and a single or a series of cells on the rear wall. The second phase of excavating similar shrine include the examples at Thirukkalukkundram, Singa Perumal Koil, Singavaram, Melaccheri, Mamandur, two examples at Mahabalipuram and finally Saluvankuppam. Narasimhavarman, more popularly known as Mamalla was responsible for these structures, which have become more elaborate stylistically. The cave temples at Singaperumal Koil and Singavaram are of Vaishnavite dedication. The cell at Singavaram is rectangular to enshrine a sayanamurti or deity sleeping. There was prolific building activity in Mahabalipuram. Varaha cave temple, Mahisasura Mardini cave temple and Adivaraha cave temple show significant elaboration in sculptural treatment. The sculpture in these cave temples are essentially figural and bespeak the tolerance of the king. As decoration, these sculptures are narrative panels most often. The cave temples record the Gods and Goddess of the time. The Varaha cave temple contains four panels, the Bhavaraha, Trivikrama, Gajalakshmi and Durga. The scheme indicates a congenial religious atmosphere of liberal worship; Without strict schism of cults and sects since, Vaishnavite and Saivite images, male and female deities are combined in a single shrine. Durga depicted is saumyamurti, yet follows the prescription of shastra. Durga is in samabangha, standing on a buffalo's head, wearing kirita makuta and carrying different weapons in her eight hands. Durga appears in this form in a niche adjoining the Trimurti cave temple at a slightly later date but under the same king. Gajalakshmi is a hieratic representation of Lakshmi seated on a lotus flanked by elephants and attendants, a depiction symbolising prosperity and common to this day.

The Mahishasuramardini cave temple is dedicated evidently to Durga. The dwarapalikas replace the dwarapalas as door guardians of Devi shrines. Mahishasuramardini panel in the shrine is a masterpiece of Pallava Sculpture. Mahishasuramardini, an aspect of Goddess Durga has been captured in victorious act of quelling the demon. The calm force expressed by the posture is in contrast to the brutal animal force of Mahishasura, stressed by the strong diagonal line, and the chaotic army of Mahishasura. The army of Durga comprising of chaushad yoginis is suggested by the ladies of whom Jaya could be recognized. Durga seems to

be gaining popularity. Opposite to the above mentioned panel, is Vishnu in yoganidhra. The panel evokes the tranquility and emphasizes the introspective mood, by means of horizontal lines. Lakshmi at the feet of sleeping Vishnu is a common formula. The Ayudhapurushas are interesting—the weapons being personified though not uncommon in the later period appears afresh in the example.

From the viewpoint of figural sculpture the Adivaraha cave temple is significant. Enshrined on the walls of the mandapas are different deities: Vishnu standing in frontal position four armed and adored by Adishesha and two rishis; Harihara—a composite form of Vishnu and Siva; Gajalakshmi, similar to the one at Varaha cave temple; Durga—a graceful figure in tribanga pose standing on a buffalo-head and flanked by deer and ganas on top and two devotees and two attendants in the foreground; Siva Gangadhara already a common subject; and Brahma a frontal standing figure four armed and with prescribed weapons of Kamanadalu and akshamala. The theme is diverse representing the trinity in isolated panels; Lakshmi and Durga, the Devis of Vaishnavite and Saivite traditions.

The panel representing Durga needs special mention. Dwarfish and pot bellied Siva ganas skip around the standing figure of Durga. Two devotees flank her at her feet, the one to her right cutting and offering his head which is held up by the tuft with his left hand while with his right hand he is hacking it off with a long sword shown in the carving as pointing to the neck. The cult of Durga was popular in Pallava times. This as well as another similar panel of Durga in Draupadi Ratha carved during the rule of Mamalla have been taken to indicate the practice of human sacrifice to Durga. In the description of the burning grounds in Puhar recorded by Sangam literature we get “a terrific and haunting picture of the sights and sounds of the cremation ground, the midst of which the following description of Durga’s temple occurs in Manimekkalai. “The great temple of Kadamarselvi with the high sacrificial altar in front surrounded by tall trees with drooping branches from which

hang heads of those who had offered their lives with unshaken mind”

“Ulaiya vullamodu yirk kadaniruttor  
Talai tungu nedumarantāIndu  
Kadamarselvi kaliperukottam (Mani)-(6-50-54)

உளைய உள்ளமோடு உயிர்க்காட நிறுத்தோர்  
தலை தூங்கு நெடுமரந்தாழ்ந்து  
காடமர் செல்வி கவிப்பெருகோட்டம் (மணி)

The practice of head offering to Durga is also mentioned in Kalingathuparani. According to the commentator T. N. Ramachandran, Kadamarselvi is Durga who resides in kadu-or sudukadu i.e. burning ghats. The hair is generally tied to the branch of a tree and then the head severed. The Siva temple at Pasupathi koil near Tanjore represents a ritual of Chola period wherein a devotee offers his head to Durga-the ritual seems to have been prevalent as late as Chola period. The ritual of self sacrifice also included ‘the piercing of the palm at the beginning for the first bloodshed.’ This first act is depicted in the Durga panel in Adivaraha temple at Mahabalipuram. The inclusion of act of self sacrifice of Durga Panel and customary weapons she carried, point her as wrathful (ugramurti) while her graceful form relieves the sternness. The devotee in the act of self sacrifice holds a sword in his arm pit and with a small dagger in his right hand he is shown piercing his left palm.

Mamalla experimented with monolithic, three dimensional temple forms. The reputed Five Rathas along with Ganesha Ratha a little further off are major contribution of Mamalla. In a nutshell these are recorded examples of structural shrines of the past which were of perishable materials. They are also models for the subsequent temple architecture. The Rathas comprise the experimental examples of various plans and elevations of vimana as prescribed in the canonical texts. None of them were consecrated, the finished pieces of crowing finials are found on the ground awaiting consecration. The cells are either not scooped out yet, or empty of deities except in the case of Draupadi Ratha.

The war against the Chalukyas probably interrupted the artistic activities.

The panel within the cell, in Draupadi Ratha is similar to the relief in Adivaraha cave temple includes the devotee engaged in the ritual of self sacrifice. Mamallapuram appears to be celebrated for Durga cult. According to Kurunthogai (218 and Paddirupattu (66) Durga resides in rocky areas, She is hailed her as Suli — the wielder of trident to whom vows are made.

“Vidar — mukai — adukkathu—viral kelu  
Sūlikku Kādanum punan”

விடர் முகை அடுக்கத்து விறல் கெழு  
சூலிக்கு காடெனும் புனன்.

Korravai, Vetri Madandai, Kadamarselvi and Kadurai Kadavul are names referring to Durga in Tamil literature. Thirumurugarruppadai refers to her as palaiyal, and Devaram as ‘Kadukol’. Silappadikaram described Durga cult. Like Siva she is said to have swallowed poison. Silappadikaram hails her as Bahdrakali who made Siva dance (adal kandaruliya anangu).

The appearance of stag in the Durga panels of Varaha and Adivaraha temples suggests that in addition to lion, the stag was her vahana a very rare feature of iconography and peculiar to Tamil country. Contemporary Pandya Sculpture depicts her so between the seventh and tenth century. Sambandar refers to the stag as the mount of Durga.

The three sides of Arjuna’s Ratha represent Vrishabhantika, Garudantika and Indra on elephant. The last mentioned has lead to difference of opinion, many claiming it to be Skanda. On the basis of Thirumurugarruppadai (109-110) the form could be identified as Skanda, since he is riding on an elephant wielding the goad in his right hand. Some scholars believe the panel represents Brahma Sasta-an aspect of Subrahmanya exposing the ignorance of Vedas. A quotation from Marg (Vol. XXI. June’70) reads “It is surprising that excepting one or two cases, temples solely dedicated to Skanda as principal deity are not seen and even the sculptures representing him during the period A.D. 600-1000 A.D. are meagre”.



The sculptures occur on all the three storeys of Dharmaraja Ratha. The variety is astounding. Siva four armed and standing is represented twice. The list of sculpture is as follows; Harihara, Ardhanari Siva, Brahma, Skanda as Brahma Sasta or Gurumurti, Siva Vinadhara, Siva Ardhanari, Siva with Chandesa, Siva Kankalamurti, Siva Gangadhara, Garudantika, Kalari Siva, Vrishabhantika, Andhakasuramurti, Visnu standing, Siva with Nandi in human form, Kaliya Krishna, Chandra, Surya, Dakshinamurthy; a bard, a woman carrying a basket of flowers, a swayampaki are part of the sculptural scheme. Dharmaraja Ratha is a land mark in the evolution of temple architecture and sculpture. Vimana form assumed its character in this example. The sculpture is architectonic in nature merging with architecture. The diverse themes are rendered with emphasis on form rather than on the details of drapery and ornamentation. The hieratic quality of these Gods is unmistakable. Many a deities make their appearance for the first time on the temples. Both the shanta and ugra aspects of Siva are represented. There is a subtle admixture of Vaishnavite and Saivite Gods. Brahma is included, too, for the first time. Chandesa is given importance. Chandi, the chief seneschal of Siva's army would soon get his due importance on the temple walls, though in Dharmaraja Ratha he appears with Siva, a humble figure embraced with affection by the Lord.

The top most tala is important, in the orientation of Dakshinamurti on the south and inclusion of Surya and Chandra. Following this structure Dakshinamurti appears on the south walls of the shrine for many subsequent centuries. Olakhaneswara temple and Shore Temple at Mahabalipuram and Kailasanatha at Kanchipuram help set the tradition of Dakshinamurti represented as the Lord of the South. Kaliya Krishna is an interesting panel. Kaliya is depicted in human form, his head, shaded by the three hoods of serpent, Krishna as a young boy dances holding the tail of the serpent. This panel is the earliest representation of the theme.

Adjacent to the magnificent open air relief on the rock surface, the 'Descent of the Ganges' in Mahabalipuram stands Krishna Mandapam. The large expanse of the rear wall of the mandapa has been carved into Govardhana Giridhara scene.

The structural mandapa added at a much later date probably in the 16th century A.D. mars the intended open view of the relief. The conception of the parent rock visually being identified with Govardhana is sadly interfered by the mandapa. The roughly cut upper edge of the panel provides a horizontal line - the lower edge of the hill that was lifted by the Lord. Beneath the line the episode is illustrated. Krishna lifts the mountain in a nonchalant manner on his outstretched hand. The other hand offers abhaya in a characteristic manner. Towards his right Balarama is resting his hand on a gopa's shoulder. Krishna and Balarama are shown larger than the others. It is a characteristic idiom of Indian Sculpture. The divinity is represented following hierarchical order established; the highest in hierarchy is generally depicted in a bigger size. The panel is indeed a charming rural scene with an accent on the mother and child theme. Mother carrying a child, the cow licking the calf. The cowherd milks the cow. Closeby a gopi balances a fodder on her head, even as she is holding a pile of milk-pots in a rope sling. A wood cutter with an axe on his shoulder behind whom is represented a mother carrying her child. Further up a cowherd plays a flute. All around is the cattle world and occasional cowherd couples dancing. On the left of Krishna a little boy stands in curious wonder, and a woman, milk pots poised on her head. In short, the sculptor has captured the carefree spirit of gokula when Indra caught them unawares. Among the gopis one lady is distinguished by her graceful pose and dress; she wears karanda makta. She is accompanied by an attendant gopi. 'Her importance singles her out as Nappinnai, the beloved of Krishna. Silapathikaram stresses the association of Nappinnai with Krishna and Balarama'. Valiyon (Balarama), Mayon (Krishna) and Nappinnai take part in the dance called 'Achchiar Kuravai' described in the seventeenth chapter of Silapathikaram. Andal's Thirupavai mentions the Krishna Nappinnai cult. Around 600 A.D. Appar refers to Krishna 'Eruden eluadarndai'—a reference to Krishna's fight with seven bulls before his marriage to Nappinnai. This peculiar tradition is recorded in Sangam literature. Puram describes Mayon and Valiyon (46 & 58) as Krishna and Balarama.

Thiruvaimozhi says ;

Vaimbu avil kodai porutha

Malvidai elumadartta sempavala tiralvayan

வைம்பு அவிழ் கொடை பொருத்த

மால்விடை ஏழுமடர்த்த செம்பவழத் திரள்வாயான்

The much prevalent Krishna Nappinnai cult is perpetuated in Krishna Mandapa at Mahabalipuram.

The sculpture of the Pallava show a steady advance in the mastery over the intractable, hard granite.

The daring venture of Mahendravarman left must impact in his period. He became the guiding inspiration to the neighbours; the early Pandyas of the South, the Adigaiman of Kongu Country, The Cheras of Kerala and the early Eastern Chalukyas of Kalyani on coastal Andhra. All of them excavated similar rock hewn shrines in their respective territories. The excavations of Early Pandyas and adigaimans fall within the scope of this paper.

Kalabhras were put down by the Pallava founder Simhavishnu and Kadungon of early Pandyas. The proximity of Pallava territory, the marriage alliance with Pallavas, association of early Pandyas and Pallavas with Saivite saints are factors which fostered similar art in the regions of early Pandyās. Their reign came to an end in 920 A.D., felled by Chola king Parantaka-I. The works of Early Pandya bear unmistakable Pallavan influence. Early Pandyas excavated with great fervour cave temples of Mahendran style at Thirumalaipuram, Chokkampatti, Anamalai, Thirupparankunram, Kunnakudi, Thrukkolakudi, Pillaiyarpatti and so on. Apart from these modest shrines an ambitious monolithic temple dedicated to Siva is their major contribution. Notwithstanding the Pallavan traits Rashtrakuta influence is evident in the mode of excavation.

The cave temple at Thirupparankundram is five celled with three cells cut into the rear wall and two on the narrow ends of the mandapa. They enshrine skanda, Durga, Ganesa, Vishnu and Siva in linga form. They represent five of the six Gods of 'shanmatha' founded by Sankara. Siva dancing on the outer wall of the cell is exquisite with Nandi, ganas and devas watching.

A general study reveals a predilection for Saivite Gods since all the caves are dedicated to either Siva or Subrahmanya excepting the already mentioned five celled shrine at Thirupparankundram. Siva if not in linga form, appears popularly in dancing pose. In a cave temple at Kunnakudi, says Sivaramamurti, is found "Nataraja dancing with eight arms in the 'bhujataruvana' tradition which is characteristic of art in the Deccan and North India. Occasionally the form occurs even in Tamil areas, for example, the Nallur Nataraja in bronze which is the late Pallava workmanship. Nataraja is dancing in the lalitha pose and two ganas are seated on either side of Him, keeping time as in early Chola bronze from Melaperumbalam".

one of the cave temples at Anamalai is dedicated to Subrahmanya and his consort Devasena. Divine army is personified as a damsel seated as Skandas's consort. Both are seated in virasana. Instead of the customary dwarapala, two birds namely the peacock and the cock guard the doorway. Subrahmanya was a popular deity in the extreme south under Early Pandyas.

Ganesa receives earliest representation in this area, too. He wears karanda makuta, the trunk curling to balance the modaka on its tip. The single tusk is on the right side. He is four armed with pasa and ankusa on the upper right and left hands. The lower rights rests on his knee, the other on the paunch. The close resemblance of Ganesa in the Mahendra's cave temple at Vallam has lead the scholars to conclude that the Ganesa in Vallam was a later installation by Pandyas.

A cave temple at Thirupparankunram contains the whole family of Siva in adjacent niches; Natesa, Sivakamasundari, Heramba Vinayaka and Skanda. Nandi in human body and bovine head completes the family group.

However, the major monument of the period is the half finished temple at Kalugumalai. A temple at the foot of the hill is dedicated to Subrahmanya (it is still in worship) while, higher up the incomplete structure is dedicated to Umasahita Siva. Under the caves of the vimanas facing the cardinal points are carved, Siva and Parvati on the east, Dakshinamurti with

Apasmara at his foot on the south, seated Narasimha on the west and Brahma on the north an indirect representation of Trimurti. According to Sivaramamurti, Dakshinamurti of this temple has a unique feature. "As the Lord presiding over music he usually carries the Vina. In this singular instance, Dakshinamurti plays not the veena but the mridanga, the drum. The mridanga is associated with dance. So Dakshinamurti here is not only the Lord of Music but also of Dance. This is probably the only instance of Dakshinamurti as Vinadhara Dakshinamurti playing not the veena but the mridanga."

Narasimha is seated with defiant expression on his face conforms to the religious prescription. "The youthful face without a beard and the torso with a small waist suggest Brahma as a deva". This is the traditional representation of Brahma in South India. In North Indian sculpture Brahma is shown as Pithamaha of Gods with beard and paunch. At lower levels is a series of Gods namely Dakshinamurti, seated Vishnu, Siva, Surya, Chandra and Skanda as Gurumurti. The youthful Skanda carries a javelin, wears a jewelled crown.

Siva and Subrahmanya are important deities of this region.

King Gunasila of the comparatively unknown Adigaiman rulers was probably responsible for the two cave temples at Namakkal; one dedicated to Narasimha and the other to Anantasyin-both of Vaishnava tradition and both still in popular worship. An examination of the themes sculptured in the Narasimha cave temple reveals three depictions of the same incarnation of Vishnu. In Vaikuntha Narayana panel, Vishnu reveals to the Gods the form he was to assume to slay Hiranyakasipu. This relief displays an unique grouping of figures. Vishnu seated on coiled Anantha is majestic. On the right foreground is a seated Narasimha or Bala Narasimha form, his expression a mixture of strength, anger and friendliness. This four armed Bala Narasimha is unknown elsewhere. The others are Brahma and Siva standing on either side of Vishnu. Half figures of Surya and Chandra appear behind. Ugra Narasimha panel is awe inspiring; Narasimha is engaged in the act of his incarnation. The diagonals emphasize the wrathful force of Narasimha on one hand and the helpless despair of Hiranyakasipu on the other.

As could be imagined it is the seated Kevala Narasimha that is enshrined as the image of worship. Ugramurti is unfit for worship in the temples. Kevala Narasimha figure is an enormous rock cut relief on the rear wall of the cell. Siva and Brahma are depicted appeasing his anger, Surya and Chandra act as chamara bearers while Sanaka and Samandana standing on either side.

The Varaha avatar and Vamana avatar are the other two examples of Narasimha cave temple. Both of them are narrative in character. From artistic point of view the Pallava representation of the same themes is superior in combining the animal head with a human form and in the arrangement of auxiliary figures. Vamana avatar depicts two episodes in the same panel. On the right the dwarfish Brahmin receives the donation; the donor is about to pour water on the receiver's hand. The left side shows Trivikrama.

Ananthasayi cave temple has a necessarily rectangular sanctuary to accomodate a sleeping figure. The sculptural scheme includes Trivikrama, Kevala Narasimha and oddly Sankaranarayana. The last is an admirable inclusion. The composite form of Siva and Vishnu is not an uncommon subject. Pallava examples expresses the same subject as Harihara, in Adivaraha cave temple and Dharmaraja Ratha. Vidya Dehejia remarks, "sculptural evidences indicate an undoubted influence from Pallava carvings particularly in the depiction of tall and slender figures in 'southern' style. Architectural inspiration from the same source is clear. A consideration of the choice of themes, however, seems to point to an effect of Chalukyan rock cutting of the late 6th century. The Narasimha cave at Namakkal contains representation of the Vamana, Varaha and Narasimha avatars and of Vishnu seated on Ananta, all four themes found in one form or another in the verandah of cave IV at Badami." She points out the possibility of direct knowledge of the Badami examples by the Adigaiman artisans.

The rock-cut phase comes to an end in the period of Rajasimha of the Pallava dynasty. Rajasimha to his credit directed a new phase of architecture—that of structural temples. He experimented with different materials like sandstones, leptinite and basalt. He established the tradition of structural temples and the

temple as an organic unit of architecture and sculpture. The shore Temple due to the corrosive nature of stone and saline atmosphere affords very little from the point of view of sculpture. Nevertheless representations of Kiratarjuna, Dakshnamurti, Durga and an young Subrahmanya could be mentioned-not for their sculptural merit but for their themes.

Kailasanatha complex at Kanchipuram, is by far the most important. It is a joint venture of Rajasimha and his son Mahendra III. The temple is complete in architectural lay out, planned in the elevation of the vimana, in the addition of the subsidiary shrines and in its sculptural scheme. The fiftyeight 'malika' shrines and the parivara shrines surrounding the garbagraha enshrine diverse Gods and Goddesses. "The external walls of the Parivara shrines and the malika contain a variety of sculpture, both Saivite and Vaishnavite; of varied iconography thus making this temples complex a vertiable museum of iconography and plastic art. The sculptures include the dikpalas and Ganesa who makes his first appearance in Pallava temples as also the Sapta matrika group, Chandesa and other parivara deities". This quotation from 'Temple of South India' by K. R. Srinivasan underlines the importance of the temple. The panels of Durga, Dakshinamurti, Kaliya Krishna show an advanced style with more flexible forms due partly to the softer sandstone. Special interest is evident in dancing postures. Kaliya Krishna is depicted dancing with dignity. Lord Siva in Chatura and Urdhva postures are interesting panels. The most stricking feature is the domination of Somaskanda theme in the sculpture. Somaskanda panel and the rearing lion motif are the stamp of Rajasimha's style. Rajasimba installed Somaskanda panels even in some of the structures of his predecessors. Thus the unfinished Dharmaraja Ratha enshrines the Somaskanda panel in its finished top most storey.

Somaskanda is a representation of Siva with his consort and child Skanda on the lap. It is a happy domestic scene. It is said that the Siva form that the Pallavas worshipped was incorporated with Subrahmanya the God of victory. The concept of Subrhamanya as God of victory belongs to Chalukyas and probably Rajasimha borrowed from them and incorporated with Siva. The predilection

for the Somaskanda form points to an yearning for peace after the long wars against Chalukyas.

The contribution of Pallavas towards architecture and sculpture of Tamil Nadu cannot be overestimated. Firstly the period between 600 A.D. to 900 A.D. is the formative period of temple building in Tamil Nadu. Following the initial breakthrough in the material for temple building, the various forms of vimana were experimented by Mamalla. Subsequently his structure evolved into the majestic vimana at Tanjore. It is interesting to note that about the same time the canons are being compiled and given literary forms. The shastras categorize the temples, prescribe the measurements and plans for the various structure and provide formulae for the images.

In a temple the idol of worship installed in the Garbhagriha is the most important and provides a 'vertical line of concentration'. Paradoxically, the sanctuaries of all the early shrines of Mahendra and Mamalla Period are empty-Mahendra had to fight the conservatism. Mamalla's efforts were abortive due to the wars against Chalukyas of Badami. The only exception, the Draupadi Ratha enshrines a relief panel exemplifying Durga cult, where one would expect a formal image fit for worship. Rajasimha brought about a revolution by installing stone slabs of Somaskanda in the temples built by him and in some of his forefather's construction,

Gradually the Pallava artisans gained mastery over the material and became adept in the sculptural adornment of the shrines and temples. Their creativity and talent found outlet on the side walls of the mandapas, the exterior walls of the garbhagriha, and the walls of Malika shrines. The balanced combination of Saivite and Vaishnavite themes is a remarkable feature of Pallava Sculpture. The range of forms is wide. The style is architectonic and restrained.

A chronological survey reveals that in the early years of Pallava rule, deities of war and valour dominated. Durga cult was very popular. In Kongu country Narasimha was worshipped. Ranganatha, the sayanamurti of Vishnu found honour of special worship in both Pallava and Adigaiman period. According to



shastras a sayanamurti is worshipped for the vira motive. Incarnations of Vishnu receives special representation. At the time, the political mode of the country was warlike. Simhavishnu, the founder of the Pallava dynasty brought an end to the atrocities of Kalabhras who practised the reckless religion that involved repeated human sacrifice. South India owes a lot to Simhavishnu. The ultimate fall of Kalabhras was effected by his illustrious son Mahendra. Mahendra also had to contend with the minor kingdoms surrounding his territory and the major attack by Chalukya Pulikesin. Vindication of his father's enemy was the pre occupation of Mamalla. Hence, it is not surprising Gods were sought to render valour and prowess or inflict defeat on enemy. Yet worship of Siva continued at the background as the dedication of most of the cave temples testify.

Siva as the Lord of Kailasa, was the royal deity of worship in Rajasimha's time. Rajasimha and his successors erected temples for different manifestations of Siva and Vishnu. Rajasimha's preference was for Somaskanda. Siva and his consort beated with Skanda on their lap, flanked by Vishnu and Brahma; it is a congenial family portrait of Siva. An yearning for peace, evident in the period of Mamalla had been achieved. The great number in which Somaskanda panels pervade the sculpture of the period indicate a country prospering well and basking in the warmth of peace. Very many deities make their first appearance. The orientation of deities like Dakshinamurti, Chandesa, and Brahma in the temple scheme was formulated. The temple became an organic programme of architecture and sculpture.

With the revival of Chola power under Vijayalaya Chola, Tamilian Art enters a new phase. The extensive and expansive art of Chola is generally divided into three phases: Early Chola period (907 to 985 A.D.), Middle Chola Period (985 A.D. to 1070 A.D.) and Late Chola period (1070 A.D. to 1280 A.D.). Strictly speaking, Chola Art is only a continuation and development of the Art of the Pallavas; yet it evolved into a Classic Art developing certain distinct stylistic features. For nearly five hundred years Cholas held sovereignty over the whole of South India. Cholas being prolific builders the whole of South India was studded with temples of various dimensions ranging from small shrines to

mamooth constructions.

The temples of Early Chola period were built under Paranthaka I, Sundara Chola, Aditya II, Uthamma Chola and Rajaraja I. Almost all the temples of the period are Kaṇṇalis i.e. stone temples. The grand structure of the period is the Vijayalaya Cholisvaram at Narthamalai. The circular Omkara mulasthana enshrined a Sivalinga. The garbagraha was originally surrounded by ashta parivara shrines of which only six remain at present. The parivara shrines sheltering auxillary deities of worship indicate elaboration in temple rituals and temple lay out.

In Srinivasanallur two Siva temples, two Vishnu temples and a Marriamman temple, all belonging to 9th and 10th centuries have been traced. The tolerance of the Saivite royalty is noteworthy.

The worship of village Gods was an age old practice in South India—dating back to the primitive tribes. To mention a few—the Grama Devas, Ayyanars, Pidaris and Minnadiyans comprise a few such Gods worshipped. These village deities are not considered supreme cosmic powers; but as benevolent Gods of the locality they are worshipped with great reverence, through the centuries. Most of these deities are female, excepting Ayyanars and Muniyandis—pointing to their origin from fertility cults. The role of women in the fields and in life could have lead to the deification of female energy.

Pidary protects people against evil spirits and epidemic. She is known by the various names of Kali and Mahakali with power over death. She later becomes integrated with Durga as Mahishasuramardhini. The ghory practice of animal and human sacrifices were offered to her, muturing Durga cult.

Mariamman is Goddeas of small pox and other epidemics. Her name derived from that of Mara, God of Death. Sacrifices were offered to her too. It is believed that by keeping her appeased epidemics and diseases would be warded off. She is worshiped also as Selliamma, Draupadi and Angalamma. Basically the religious practices are primitive rituals. She is worshipped out of fear, not so much out of devotion. She is generally conceived as

ugramurti. Her shrines are modest erections of brick and thatch, of no architectural and sculptural merits. One of the most important temples of Early Chola Period is dedicated to Mariamma at Srinivasanallur indicate to an elevated stature she received at the period. Selliamman temple at Alambakkam is a rare example in the south that is dedicated to Saptamatrika. The saptamatrikas enjoyed benefit of popular worship in the north more than in the south. All the temples of Early Chola period are characterised by architectural decoration and paucity of figural sculpture. For one, Cholas appreciated the value of empty spaces and volume of architectural members. Probably the expertise achieved in bronze casting could have diverted the attention of imagery to chalamurtis or movable idols.

The second phase of Chola Art concern the grand edifices built by the Rajaraja the Great and his son Rajendra, namely Rajarajeswaran at Tanjore and Brihadisvara temple at Gangai konda Cholapuram. The Great Temple at Tanjore was dedicated to Brihadisvara and his consort Brihannayaki. The well planned temple is laid out within the enclosure wall. Seperate Nandi Mandapa, Amman shrine and Chandi shrine emphasize the importance of this deities in the architecturall development of temples. The temple dedicated to Subrahmanya within the Great Temple premises is a much later addition. The temple is huge in dimension. The unique features of architecture is that the garbhagriha is surrounded by two storeyed pradakshinapatha, the plan being sarvatobhadra with the tower constructed in kadalikakarna mode. The vimana reached its climax in this example, logically evolving from the three stages of development in the Pallava Period.

The outer walls of garbhagrha and ardha mandapa enshrine figural sculpture within niches. The figures of deities are relegated in two tiers on the garbhagriha walls. The figures represented the lower tier are Bhikshatana, Virabhadra, Dakshinamurti, Kalanthaka, Nataraja, Harihara, Lingodbhava, Chandrasekhara, Ardhanarishvara, Gangadhara, Pasupatamurti, Siva Alinganamurti. Apart from Dvarapalas, all the figures carved on the walls of garbhagrha are various forms of Siva.

Most of the forms were familiar from the Pallava sculpture. Nataraja in tandava is to gain importance from this period onwards. Siva Alinganamurti and Lingodhbava are repeated twice, once on the western walls and again on the southern side of eastern wall. Lingodhbava is reference to Siva when as a column of fire he occupied the three worlds and challenged Brahma and Vishnu to find the beginning and end. Lingodhbava occupies the central niche on the western wall in axis to the installed linga in the sanctuary also in the subsequent examples. That Nataraja gains popular worship around this period is evident from the quantity of examples found both in stone and bronze. Dancing Siva is acclaimed. Nataraja in 108 karanas of Bharata's Natya Shastra is painted on the inner walls of pradakshina patha at the upper storey level.

The upper tier on the exterior wall of the vimana depicts tripurantaka in different poses. There are about twenty two of them. The creative imagination of the sculptures glorifies the quellers of Tripura demon. A temple specifically dedicated to Tripurantaka was built at Kuram about 1050 A.D. by Rajadhi Raja.

on the southern and northern walls of maha mandapa are portrayed Ganesa, Vishnu with his consorts, Gajalakshmi, Bhairavar, Mahihasuramardini and Saraswati. On the walls of maha mandapa Vaishnavite deities have been given due recognition. Vishnu with his two consorts makes appearance for the first time. Gajalakshmi has been represented from the period of Pallavas. Both Bhairavar and Mahihasuramardini are ugramurtis. Ganesa not to be found in early rock cut examples of Pallavas appears in Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram. Saraswathi as Goddess of arts and learning pairs well with representation of Gajalakshmi the Goddess of wealth. Chandikeshwara honoured with a special shrine on the northern quarter has been elevated to a special position as chief senechal of Siva's army. The tradition is followed in all the subsequent Saivite temples.

Rajendra built a magnificent temple at his new capital, Gangaikonda chola puram. It is modelled after the great Temple at Tanjore. The sculpture on the lower tier of the

sanctury wall lists a Ganapathi, Ardhanari, Siva, Dakshinamurti, Harihara and Nataraja on the southern side; Gangadhara, Lingodhbava. Maha Vishnu, Subrahmanya, Vishnu Anugrahamurti, on the west face; and Kalantaka, Durga, Brahma, Bhairavar, Kamanthaka on the northern side.

All the members of Sivas family are enshrined (Ganesa, Subrahmanya and Durga). Trinity is well represented with Maha Vishnu on the western face, Brahma on the north and Dakshinamurti and Nataraja on the south. The devakoshtas on the upper tier contain Kalantaka, Yama, Dakshinamurti, Nirutti, Bhikshatana, Vishnu, Lingodhbava, Brahma, Vayu, Gowri Prasada, Soma, Isana Bhuvaraha, and Subrahmanya. There is figure identified as Varuna. Apart from these, a pair of four armed deities on each side of the entrance to garbhagriha and a three headed figure on the west wall are yet to be identified.

The fact that the God of Vishnavite tradition is represented on the sanctified walls of the garbhagriha speaks highly of the broad mindness of the king of Saivite orientation. Vishnu as one of Trinity appears quite commonly. But inclusion of Bhuvaraha on the walls of garbhagriha is an exceptionally rare venture. Yama, Varuna, Nirutti, Soma, Isana are guardians of different directions. In Mandala, they occupy the squares on the outer periphery. Their inclusion on the sculptural scheme of the temples emphasizes the meaning of Hindu temple as a Mandala—Transposition of the planets and Gods in hierarchical order establishing the cosmos into a magic diagram. The Hindu temple conform to Mandala and has high metaphysical symbolism.

Rajendra was a prolific builder about fifty four temples are attributed to him. In the Middle Chola period the Emperors vied with one another in the deeds of valour and temple building. They bequeathed to posterity a noble treasure of art—temples and sculptures.

The broadmindness of the kings of Late Chola Period, who were Saivites too is exemplified by the many temples of Vaishnava sects built by them. Ranganatha temple at Srirangam—though its origin dates back to the days of Ramayana belongs to

the Late Chola Period. Temples were consecrated, dedicated to Venkatesa perumal and Vishnu Ulagalanda perumal. Adipurisvar Temple at Tiruvottiyur is a fine example with sculptural specimen, rebuilt by Rajendra I. An image of Bhairavar was installed in a separate shrine in the north prakara of this temple. The image stands in samabangha. The tongues of flame make the jatabhara. A skeleton of a face is placed in the centre just above the forehead. The snakes as fillet knotted up in front, the trident, the fangs and the glaring eyes emphasize Bhairavar's raudra aspect. His lower left hand in kati pose and the lower right in abhaya identifies him as a deity of worship. Bhairavar receives special attention, also in the later temples. Dakshinesvara and Chandeshvara of the temple share the same plastic quality with Bhairavar.

The celebrated shrine of Tenkailasam associated close with the life of Tamil saint Appar was rebuilt by Rajendra I. Pancha nadisvara temple as its called boasts fine figures of Durga, Subrahmanya and Brahma. Subrahmanya appears rather stunted, probably to emphasize his youth. The artists have excelled in the representation of Brahma. Seated in virasana, Brahma is imbued with a feline grace in his benign manifestation. Elaborate jewellery and ayudhas get special treatment while his dress is abstracted, suggested just by the tassels. The image possesses supple grace characteristic of metal images of the period. Abstraction of lotus on which he is seated is unique. Cushion like object provides a foot rest.

At this juncture, it would be appropriate to evaluate the style of Cholas sculpture since two stupendous edifices exemplify the climax of not only the Chola Art but also the Art of Tamilnadu. "Sculpture under Cholas are relieved of its architectonic context, and becomes subsidiary to architecture, unlike the Pallava period." The continuous experience of stone cutters has helped in mastering the material, so the Chola sculptures are infused with a rhythmic quality and supple grace, not found in the sculpture of Pallavas. "A flat upper torso, the protuberance on the knees and a soft and supple form are some interesting physiognomical traits shared by a large number of Chola specimen." The fluidity of outline is common both to the metal and stone sculpture of the period.

Humanism pervades the figures of Gods and Goddesses. They are achieved by use of free pose. There is an increasing love for rendering the details of ornamentation. In general though the icon calls for simplified treatment as in the figure of Bhairavar. Chola images in contrast to alto-relievo of Pallava are fully in the round, standing out boldly from the matrix of stone. But the 'unifacial or 'ardha chitra' mode" was prevalent too.

The Late Chola period dates between A.D. 1070 and A.D. 1270. The Siva temple at Melakkadambur was modified and rebuilt in this period, and came to be called Amrithaghateswara temple. The structure is replete with sculpture of early twelfth century A.D.—a veritable picture gallery in stone.

Dakshinamurty is housed on the southern side, Vishnu on the west and Brahma on the northern side of garbhagriha—all of them in position traditionally assigned to them. A comparison between Uma Alinganamurti and Gangadhara speaks volumes on the artists who rendered them. The former appears on the northern wall. It is a humanistic interpretation of Divine romance. The Divine has been humanized. Uma sits on Siva's lap, proud and unyielding suggested just by her posture, while Siva coaxes her attention. Siva's left hand embraces Uma while with his right he touches the chin of Uma in suggestive manner. The intimacy is expressed just by postures yet without loss of dignity of the Divine.

The mood in the panel of Gangadhara is in direct contrast. Siva stands majestically with one leg on the head of Apasmara and the other on a rocky ledge which is shared by his consort Uma. Ganga descending on to the head of Siva has received an insignificant treatment. Uma's posture and facial expression evokes the mood that is opposed to the mood of already mentioned Alingana-murti. The mood overshadows the narration. Durga is represented with six hands. Just behind the standing figure, her mount, lion is shown arrested in the action of running. Mahisha's head on which Durga usually stands is depicted much below—a rather detached statement—like an after thought.

Amrithakandesvara Temple includes a series of sculpture representing devas and rishis. Inscriptions in Tamil help in identify

them. Devas depicted are Devendra, Surya and Chandra. The deities are supposed to have done penance in this site during various yugas. Among the rishis the figure of Agasthya is the most prominent. Agasthya appears on the outer wall of ardha mandapa. A non divine figure depicted in devakoshta of his own is exceptional. In Gangaikondacholapuram, Rajendra receives flower crown from Siva designating him Chandesa. In that panel the king appears in the same panel as Siva. Siva is standing and the monarch kneeling in front, gracefully accepting the honour. In Melakadambur Agasthya is seated with one leg folded and the other let down. He is endowed with two hands only, since only the Divine forms have four, six, eight or twelve hands as the cognizances demand. Agasthya is a bearded man, with a pronounced paunch. In one hand he carries akshamala symbolising Vedic knowledge.

Is this figure an indication to the deification of saints? One must not forget that around this time, Nayanmars and Alvars came to be worshipped. The sculptures of saints were transformed into shrines of worship—a practice that extended up till the 17th century. A popular example of such a practice is Thiagaraja's shrine at Thiruvaiyaru,

Amrithagandeswara temple is unique also in being conceived as a chariot on wheels, two on each side drawn by caprisoned horses in prancing posture. This temple sets the trend of building 'therkkoil'.

Two other important edifices of the Late Chola Period are Iravatesvara temple at Darasuram and Kampaharesvara Temple at Tribhuvanam. "These two temples represent the last flicker of a dying lamp". Ariavatesvara Temple, built during the reign of Rajaraja II in the second half of the twelfth century A.D. is a 'typical Chola temple in its natural evolution during Late Chola Period'.

The basement of Kampaharesvara temple is carved into a series of miniature panels. On the southern side scenes from Ramayana are found. Certain episodes of the story of Rama as Lava and Kusa narrated to the gathering in Ayodhya are selected for sculptural interpretation. They comprise episodes from Uttara-kanda and so Ramayana by Kamban, it is said, has not formed the basis for sculpture. Images adorn the walls of garbagriha as customary.



"Each deity has its place ear marked: seated Dakshinamurti on the south, Lingodhbava on the west and Brahma on the north". In the niches of ardha mandapa the deities enshrined are Durga on the north, stands on severed head of Mahisha - a familiar form. Ganesa occupies the south.

According to S. R. Balasubramaniam, the worship of Sun god acquired special emphasis in the period of Kulothunga I and Vikrama Chola. The only independent temple for the deity in South India was erected. It is in this period that mandapas assumed chariot form known in Tamil as therkkoyil. The influence was felt in Orisa where the concept was epitomized in the Sun temple at Konark. Thirukkamakkottam or Amman Shrine received individual states after its introduction in Brahadisvara temple at Tanjore. Of the same origin, Chandi is enshrined on the northern side of the main shrine.

The elaboration in temple rituals which included procession, festivals and prayers (poojas) at different times of the day, special prayers on important days of the month. These rituals created a demand for utsavamurti to be taken out in procession, snananamurti to give the ritualistic bath and nrittamurthi the dancing forms. Nrittamurtis are taken procession around the temple on special occasions and kept in nritta mandapa built on the outer prakara of the temple for special worship and public viewing. The nrittamurti is a special demand of Saivite tradition and temples of Siva. The utsavamurtis, snanaparmurtis and nrittamurtis are usually in bronze having to be easily transported.

During the time of Kulothunga Nataraja came to be worshipped with great fervour. Starting very early in Chola Period, Nataraja was universally favoured during Late Chola Period. Nataraja is an auxiliary manifestation from the point of view of temple sculpture. All the Saivite temples enshrine linga in their sanctuaries and Nataraja invariably adorns the walls of the Garbagriha. Siva as Nataraja is found also in Kailasanatha Temple at Kanchipuram. But in the Pallava example he is dancing in urdhva and lalitha poses. Nataraja appears in his tandava pose, which is probably the most popular form of any deity, in Mahendras cave temple. Diminutive in size the

impact was probably not felt. Cult of Nataraja reached its zenith during the Late Chola period.

The artistic poses of dance evoked the aesthetic sense of the common man. The deep lying symbolism of Nataraja captured the interest of the intellectuals, while the sheer beauty of form fascinated the masses. Of the *lalitha*, *ananda* and *urdhva* stages of dance, the third was the most sought after. Of the many dances *Tandava* got much acclaim. The various poses were chosen for depiction in different temples.

In the temple at Chidambaram, there was a diversion of attraction and hence importance from the *Mulasthana* to the *Edirambalam* (the shrine opposite) which sheltered the *nrittamurti* - Nataraja. The *Urdhva Tandavarar* in a temple at Thiruvalangadu is praised by Sambandar, Appar and associated with Karaikal Ammaiar.

A purana described the legend of the place thus:

‘idai-tal nitti Arputan kali torkka  
adiyatu idu’

இடத் தாள் நீட்டி அற்புதன் காளி தோற்க  
ஆடியது இது.

The dance performed by the wonderful Lord to defeat Kali by raising aloft his left leg’.

Thiruvalangadu and Chidambaram, are two places associated with *urdhva-tandavas* of Siva; in his dance-contest against Kali. (At Chidambaram the defeated Kali is held to have been banished for ever to the outskirts of the town. But the pilgrimage to the Nataraja shrine is not fruitful, it is said without the one to Tillai Kali as well). Appar also refers to this legend in local hymns. ‘Adinar Kali kana Alangattu adihalare’ These idols of dancing Shiva were kept in ‘sabha’ - a hall where people gathered. Five such *sabhas* developed religious significance in Nataraja cult. The *sabhas* are *ratna sabha* (Thiruvalangadu) *kanaka sabha* (chidambaram.) *Rajata sabha* Madurai, (Tamira saba) (Thrinelveili,) gem, golden, silver, copper halls. *Chitra sabha* or picture hall is at Thirukurattam.

"Lord Nataraja's Divine Dance is usually interpreted as the enactment (of Panchakritya). They are srishti - the creation and evolution sthithi - the presentation samhara - (destruction; tirobhava illusion and concealment and anugraha - salvation, bestowals of grace. Srishti is rendered in Kalika tandava in the Jamra sabha at Tirunelveli. Gowri tandava symbolises sthithi and is represented in the chit sabha at Tiruppattur. Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram deities samhara tandava, symbolising as the name suggests, the kitya of samhara. Tripura tandava symbolising tirobhava is found in Thirukkubealam. The Ratna sabha of thiruvalangadu epitomizes the enactment of the anugraha kitya. But all the five kityas are epitomized in the glorious Ananda tandavam. Kanaka sabha at Chidambaram is an exclusive example of this. 'According to Lord Ronaldshay 'for the Indian the Nataraja is the plastic presentation of a whole philosophy. In the whirl of dance he sees the primary energy which gives life to one's existence and so sustains the universe'.

Nataraja is the 'noblest symbolism of the Supreme Power' writes B. Natarajan; a happy blend of the characters of the ascetic and the dancer in one figure and as the expression of that unstinted joy which Indian thought associated with infinity, reality and intelligence'. Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy put the greatness of Nataraja in a nutshell: 'a synthesis of science, religion and art'.

Linga worship retained an enthusiasm along with Nataraja cult. The original 'pillar of fire' had been transformed into a phallic symbol and had been installed from the Early Chola temples. Many later installations without proper documentation make the study difficult yet Saivism expressed mainly through the linga form and the fact that the direct worship of Siva was almost always to 'Linga' form cannot be denied. The colossal linga at Tanjore is of great repute. The linga may vary like 'dhara linga', 'sahasra lingas' and so on. The dhara linga in the Shore Temple at Mahabalipuram is supposed to be a later Pandya contribution. Originally Linga synthesised the Trinity. It had a square Brahma bhaga which on installation went under the ground. The Vishnu bhaga is the conversion of the square

base into an octagon in the centre. The transformed circle on top with no end was the Siva bhaga. In this context as the concept of lingodhbhava murti is apt. Lingodhbhava is the form without beginning or end that Siva assumed to challenged Vishnu and Brahma. He is included in the sculptural scheme of middle Chola temple; following which he was ever present on the garbagriha walls. The niche in direct axis to the enshrined linga in the garbagriha is assigned to Lingodhbhava. A very significant image for Siva's devotee, he is comparable with the 'Visvarupa' of Vishnu. Lingas symbolising five elements or the pancha bhutas were installed during the Chola Period; Prithvi linga for earth, appu linga for water, teyu linga or jyoti linga for fire, vayu linga for wind and akasa linga for ether were installed Thiruvavarur, Thiruvanaikka, Thiruvannamalai, Thirukkalahasti and Chidambaram.

The sculptural programme is formulated with certain deities assigned special position. Within the set norms there was enough freedom for the artists and patrons to choose or emphasize. Individual shrines for Amman, Chandi and Nandi became customary under the Cholas. Evidence of the reputed rivalry between the Saivites and Vaishnavites mentioned in history and literature are noticeably absent on the temple walls. The religious atmosphere is liberal, in some instances shrines of Vaishnavite dedication appear within Saivite premises.

Surya cult is indicated. But the most popular was the Nataraja cult. Bhairava is included in the scheme and is repeatedly appears in the temples of subsequent periods. The different phases of Chola Art developed distinctive stylistic features, In general, the elegant grace of the figures the reminder of the artistic effect of metal images.

The most sacred part of the temple, the pivot of worship was garbagriha which was duly made prominent with the huge tower forming the vimana. The experimentation and evolution of the Pallavas in 9th and 10th centuries was accelerated by the mighty Cholas. Soon, in the early 11th century itself the final was reached in the vimana of Brihadishwara Temple at Tanjore. The Cholas rebuilt some

earlier shrines, built a few temple complex but most of all erected innumerable shrines all over the country. When Pandyas rose to power in the regions of Madurai around early part of twelfth century their fervour for temple building had to be diverted to areas other than vimana. It was considered sacrilegious to destroy and rebuild the once consecrated vimana, however modest their dimensions be. Hence, the Pandyas added stupendous entrance gateways to many existing temples, the best examples being those at Chidambaram and Madurai. The gopuram, as they are called, is rectangular in plan. The lower part has a vertical section often divided into two planes by a horizontal moulding. This may be simply divided by architectural members. Some times they also contain figural sculpture in niches. The upper section of the gopuram is a pyramidal tower resting on the rectilinear vertical base. The pyramidal tower ends in a barrel vaulted roof with Surajmukha on the gables and a series of amrithakalasa crown the structure. The pyramidal area of the gopuram has pure architectural decoration of pilasters, niches and panjaras. The contour lines of such examples are generally straight and rigid. Alternatively figural sculpture in suda, (lime mortar) or stucco decorate the surface. The curved plunging contour lines of the gopuram, in such cases, result in elegantly graceful structures as in the southern gopuram at Madurai.

The only output of sculpture in relevance to present topic occurs on the vertical walls of the Nataraja temple at Chidambaram. The eastern, southern, and western gopurams contain sculptures of the Pandya. In all the three gopurams, the upper tiers are filled with the images of major deities like Gajasuraśamharamurti, Chandrasekhara, Somaskanda, Bhikshatana, Ardhanari, Tripurantaka, Vrishabantika, Lingodbhava, Kankalamurthi, Kalyanasundaramurti, Harihara, Gangadhara, represented repeatedly on all the three gopurams. These varied aspects of Siva have been popular from the time of Pallavas. Almost all the niches contain Saivite subject matter. Harihara is the composite figure indicating a Vaishnavite-Saivite union. Nandisa is repeated twice on his own niches. Somaskanda is a marvellous sculpture. Unlike in the Pallava

Reliefs of the same subject, child Skanda is depicted against the base of the throne. A new theme seems to gain popularity. Kalyanasuudaramurti occurs six times. The scene of Divine Wedding of Siva and Parvati has been captured in stone. Siva stands in abhaya. Parvati stands to the right of the Lord, she is graceful and modest. Brahma is seated and depicted in profile in the foreground. Vishnu towers above Brahma in his standing position. Siva is depicted grasping Parvati's outstretched right hand. Siva's left hand is in varadamudra. Of the six representations of the same theme two vary in rendering. They are conceived as Swayamvara of Kalyanasundaramurti. In these panels the figures of Brahma and Vishnu, the person who conducted the wedding and the person who performed the Kannikadana are omitted. This unique representation depicts Siva holding Parvati's right hand with his lower right hand while his lower left arm is placed round Parvati's body in an embrace. A curious fact is that Siva is endowed with four arms in the swayamvara panels while he possesses just two hands in the Kalyanasundaramurti panel. The swayamvara panel thus combines the divine aspect of Siva as his four armed representation proves with a more intimate posture of embrace.

While the sculptures on the upper tiers are exclusively of Siva, the lower tiers of the three gopurams have astounding variety. The lower tier of the eastern gopuram depicts Ganga and Naga. Naga is in human form with hoods of four serpents, and in anjali mudra; a rishi probably Agasthya with a book in one hand and the other hand held in Vyakhyana mudra, manmatha, Vishnu on Garuda, Sri Devi, Mahishasuramardhini, Indra, identified by his Vajra, Surya Chandeshvara, Yamuna and Bhairavar. Surya is a unique depiction. He has three faces and eight hands. He stands in samabhaya and wears karanda makuta. In the lower of the four hands he holds white lotuses in the upper hands he holds rosary and pasa. The one wheeled chariot of surya is below and carved in profile. The charioteer is seated on padmasana. The identity is debatable. The panel could well be Brahma as the three faces and the ayudhas borne by him prove. Bhairava, otherwise known as Kshetrapala is a naked figure with eight hands. The hair stands erect in a flame. The sword and shield are the weapons carried by him, with his mount

dog represented in high relief behind him. Inclusion of Sri Devi, Mahishasuramardini, Vishnu on Garuda, and seated Brahma are noteworthy though not uncommon. Manmatha is a new inclusion. Rishis are represented quite a few times though none of the them has been identified. A list of figures on the lower tier of south gopuram is provided: Badra Kali, Ganga, Naga, Graha, Rishi, Ganesa, Yamuna, Chandesvara, Agni, Isana. Sri Devi, Vishnu on Garuda, Kubera, Chandra, Subrahmanya, Saraswati, Brahma and Durga. The figures on the lower tier of western gopuram are Bhairavar, Chandesvara, Ganga, Dhanvantri, Mahishasuramardini, Sukra, Karpaka Vinayaka, Naga, Yamuna, Bhadra Kali, Kama, Agasthyar, Vishnu on garuda, Sri Devi, Subramanya, Indra, Surya, Saraswati and Visvakarma. Planets personified are Surya, Chandra and Sukra. Isana is the guardian of the north western quarter and is given special status in Saivite temples. He stands against the bull. Dhanvantri, the doctor and Visvakarma the architect are rendered as rishis but labels below read their identity. The rivers Ganga and Yamuna make fresh appearance. Bhairavar gains sudden recognition. Karpaga Vinayaka is an interesting panel of Ganapathi dancing.

Mahishasuramardini is a common representation in the temple scheme. Uma, Durga and Kali form the Devi triad. The first of these, Uma invariably appears as the consort of Siva. Umamaheswara, Alinganamurti are good example of Devi in this aspect. She is a saumyamurti and stands for the satvic quality. Durga is the second of sakta trinity and stands for the passionate temperament or rajas. Mahishasuramardini, is a manifestation of Durga. She is queller of evil but a benevolent deity. She is represented either hieractically or in the feminine grace. She is endowed with six, eight or twelve hands; each of her hand carries various weapons like shield, dagger, sword, chakra, bow and arrow, noose, bell etc. to highlight her valour. Mahishasuramardini and Durga are found repeated from the time of Pallavas to the Pandyas as these sculptures on the Gopuram confirm. But her absence in the scheme for a short period in the Middle Chola sculpture is significant. Evidently worship of Siva especially as Nataraja seen to have dominated her cult. The cult practices seemed to have come to an end, by the 12th century A.D. Kali or Mahakali is the last of the triad. She is epitomised as blood thirsty, terrorizing Goddess

of war, death and disease. Undoubtedly, a Ugramurti, her form is hair raising and terrific. She merges with the local village deities of Pidari and Angalamman and a cult seemed to have thrived under her. Her form is depicted with unrestrained features the hair let loose, the tongue stuck out, the pronounced fangs, glaring eyes, and exaggerated nails. The Kapalamala adorns her neck. She is the Goddess of the simasana Durga cult of the Pallavas seems to have merged with this glory aspect of Devi. She symbolises the thamas or 'dark' quality. Thus Uma, Durga and Kali are attributed with the triguna-satva, rajas and thamas respectively. On the southern and western gopurams of the temple at Chidambaram, Kali appears as Badrakali, as the labels below indicate. She is eight armed stands on one foot. Her right leg is raised and placed on an asura's head. Badly mutilated condition of the sculpture deities elaborate study. At this juncture mention must be made of an excellent bronze of Kali belonging to Chola Period. She is squatting in an unconventional manner and plays a symbol. The features of iconography befits the image of Kali. Her tubular limbs with exaggerated joints emphasizes her terrifying nature.

Though from the point of view of theme the sculpture of the gopurams is important, the workmanship is degenerated. Sculpture under the Pandya lack artistic merit.

The decline and fall of Chola dynasty had an inevitable impact on the art of Tamil Nadu. The sudden withdrawal of patronage affected the artistic production of the period. Tamil Nadu came under the sovereignty of Vijayanagar emperors ruling from Hampi in lower Deccan. The Vijayanagar rulers encouraged arts till 1565, when in the Battle of Talikota the Muslim rulers defeated them. The Nayakas or provincial governors of the Vijayanagar Empire were liberated from the central authority and founded their own kingdom. The period is referred to as Nayak Period. Though they were patrons of art, stylistically the art of that period is an overflow of Vijayanagar style and hence rightfully called Post Vijayanagar Style. During Vijayanagar Period and Post Vijayanagar Period there was concentrated efforts to enlarge and expand the existing temples. Amman shrines, Prakaras, Rajagopuram and mandapams were



added to many existing temples converting some of them into temple cities, sculpture took a fanciful turn.

The compound pillar known as aniaottikkal with composite mythological animals comprised major sculptural out portraits of donors were liberally included. The decorative motifs were very many. Accent was on decorative aspect and on the marvels of stone craft than on the religious sculpture. The following passage by Mahalingam gives the essence of the Vijayanagar period regarding the figural sculpture. "The icons of Gods and Goddesses, it may be pointed out, are comparatively more Vaishnava than Saiva and this is the natural result of the favour enjoyed by the former during the period, without however any prejudice to the latter. The ten incarnations of Vishnu, numerous sports of Krishna and incidents from Ramayana and Mahabharata are to be encountered in reliefs either in the Pillars in the mandapas or in other places in the temple".

In the territory of Tamil Nadu, the sculpture of the period were spread out on the mandapas and pillars thus losing their status on the walls of garbhagrha and maha mandapa. They are small in size very often and merge with the other decorative elements of the mandapa. Some of them assume narrative character. The treatment of figures changes from hieratic rendering to a more intimate representation. The deities of worship are imbued with a humane spirit. The scope of the subject was enlarged to include donors, animals and birds, and scene from everyday life merging with episodes of Hindu Pantheon.

The major deities at the capital of Vijayanagar influenced the expression in the South. Vithalaswami is the patron deity of Vijayanagar Empire. But the kings favoured Vaisnavite subject. The private temple of the royalty at Hampi is Hazara Rama temple. The fine temple of modest dimensions is dedicated to Lord Ramachandra. There is also a temple dedicated to Balakrishna in the capital. The sculpture belonged to different sects. The repertory is wide, Ganesa, Lakshmi Narasimha, Virabhadra, Sivalinga, Bhairavar, Ramachandra, Krishna, Hanuman all were honoured. Scenes from Ramayana and Mahabharata decorated the mandapa. They ebbed over to the territories of Tamil Nadu. On

the Mandapas of temples of Tamil Nadu representation of Ramachandra, Krishna in different stages of his life and engaged in various different acts are carved. Minor and subordinate deities are elevated to higher status. Bhairavar, Virabhadrar and Hanuman gain importance. Probably for the first time Rama gets special attention. In Tamil Nadu they initially appear as panel sculpture with narrative character.

Nayaka period is an age of degenerated sculpture. The themes though wide fail to impress as image of worship. But the popularity of heroes of Ramayana and Mahabharatha cannot be denied.

Virabhadra claims special position in the last phase of Tamil Nadu Temple Art as testified by examples at the Pudu mandapam at Madurai, the mandapam at Krishnavaram near Tirunelveli. The colossal Hanuman at temple at Suchindram and very many figures of Hanuman carved in high relief claiming special worship and testify the favourable attitude of the people towards him.

The sculpture in Tamil Nadu has been predominantly figural and religious. They were subordinate to the architecture orchestrating the concept of worship laid out in the plan of temples. The sculpture followed the canonical texts. Amidst such restrictions the balance swayed to favour certain Gods. In general the favoured Gods were Saivite till the mid 14th century and the wind turned to favour the Vaishnavite Gods after that period. The preferences of ruling power had great impact on popularising certain deities. In general the religious atmosphere was liberal with no fuming rivalry between sects. The rivalry between Saivite and Vaishnavite, much in evidence in Tamil literature and historical sources has not made its impact on the temple arts. There is no evidence of prejudices that one comes across from other source. The temple atmosphere seems to have been congenial and liberal yet within the limitation of shastras. Certain Gods were preferably worshiped during disturbed periods of war or founding of the empire. Durga, Narasimha, Trivikrama and Sri Ranganatha to mention a few. In the time of peace, forms of Siva and deities of the epics are given prominent attention.

Existence of Durga cult, Krishna cult and Nataraja cult in different periods is unmistakable. The Saivite dominance during the early Chola and Middle Chola Period is confirmed by the natural evidences.

The hieratic images gradually become intimate heroes of epics and mythology. The shastric sculptural scheme assumes a freer decorative mood. The sculpture adhering to the garbagraha changes position to the peripheral structures thus causing the transformation in mood.

Temple building has become an act of the past. In the absence of forceful patrons the temple building seems to have come to an end. With the intrusion of foreign rule, the political, social and economic aspects of life have changed. The religious life has adapted to the needs and has become more personal than ever before. Nevertheless the ancient temples keep alive a rich tradition.

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# பள்ளிப்படை சுந்தரபாண்டிய ஈச்சுர முடையார் கோயில்

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தோக்கம் :

பள்ளிப்படை சுந்தரபாண்டிய ஈச்சுரம் என்னும் கோயில் வரலாற்றையும், அக்கோயிலைக் கட்டிய முற்காலப் பாண்டியர்களுள் ஒருவனான வீரபாண்டியன் [கி.பி. 938-959] வரலாற்றையும் ஆராய்வதே இக்கட்டுரையின் நோக்கமாகும். எனவே முற்காலப் பாண்டியர்களுள் சிலரையும் அவர்களுள் வீரபாண்டியன் யார் என்பதையும் நிரலே காண்போம்.

முற்காலப் பாண்டியர்கள்

கடுங்கோன் [சுமார் கி.பி. 550] முதல் வீரபாண்டியன் வரை வாழ்ந்த பாண்டியர்கள் முற்காலப் பாண்டியர்கள் என அழைக்கப் படுவர். இவர்களில் கி.பி. 768-ல் முடிசூடிய முதலாம் வரகுண மகாராஜன் என்ற பராந்தக நெடுஞ்சடையன் முதல் வீரபாண்டியன் காலம் வரை கல்வெட்டுக்கள் தொடர்ச்சியாகக் கிடைக்கின்றன. அவர்கள் குடிவழியை அறிந்து கொள்வதன் மூலம் வீரபாண்டியனை இனங்கண்டு கொள்வது எளிது.

(1) பராந்தக நெடுஞ்சடையன் என்ற  
முதலாம் வரகுண மகாராஜன் [கி.பி. 768-811]

(2) ஸ்ரீமாறன் ஸ்ரீவல்லபன் [கி.பி. 811-860]

(3) இரண்டாம் வரகுணன்  
[கி.பி. 863-911]

(4) பராந்தக வீரநாராயணன்  
[கி.பி. 866-911]

(5) இராஜசிம்மன் என்ற  
மானாபரணன்  
கி.பி. [911-930]

(6) சுந்தரபாண்டியன்

(7) வீரபாண்டியன்  
[கி.பி. 938-959]

இங்கு முதலாவதாகக் கூறப்பட்ட பராந்தக நெடுஞ்சடையன் என்ற வரகுண மகாராஜன் எடுத்த கோயில்தான் திருப்பரங்குன்றம் குடை வரைக் கோயிலும், ஆனைமலை நரசிம்மப் பெருமாள் கோயிலும் ஆகும்.

இவன் மகன் ஸ்ரீமாறன் ஸ்ரீவல்லபன் காலத்தில்தான் மதுரை ஆசிரியன் இளங்கௌதமன் என்பவன் சித்தன்ன வாசல் சமணக் கோவிலைப் புதுக்கி முன்மண்டபம் எடுத்து ஓவியம் தீட்டினான்.

ஸ்ரீமாறன் ஸ்ரீவல்லபனின் முதல் மகனே இரண்டாம் வரகுணன். இவன் சோழர், பல்லவர், கங்கர் ஆகியோரை எதிர்த்துச் சோழநாட்டுத் திருப்புறம்பியத்தில் போரிட்டவன். இவனது இளவலே பராந்தக வீரநாராயணன். இவன்தான் தளவாய்புரச் செப்பேட்டை வெளியிட்டவன். இவன் சேரன் மகளை மணம் செய்திருந்தான். இவன் மனைவி பெயரில் அமைந்த ஊரே நெல்லை மாவட்டச் சேரவன் மகா தேவி என்ற ஊராகும்.

இவன் மகன் ராஜசிம்மன் என்ற மானாபரணன், சோழமன்னன் முதலாம் பராந்தகனிடம் தோற்று இலங்கை சென்று அந்நாட்டு மன்னனிடம் தன் மணிமுடி, வாள், இந்திரனாரம் போன்ற பொருட்களை அடைக்கலமாகக் கொடுத்துவிட்டுத் தன் தாய் வீடான கேரளம் சென்று ஒளிந்து கொண்டவன்.

இந்த இராஜசிம்மனின் மூத்தபுதல்வன் சுந்தரபாண்டியன்; இளையவன் வீரபாண்டியன்.

இங்கு ஆய்வுக்கு எடுத்துக் கொள்ளப்பட்ட பள்ளிப்படை சுந்தர பாண்டிய ஈச்சுரம் என்ற கோயிலைக் கட்டிய மன்னன் வீரபாண்டியன். இவன் தன் அண்ணன் சுந்தரபாண்டியனின் நினைவாகத்தான் இக் கோயிலை எடுத்திருக்கின்றான்.

இக்கோயில் இராமநாதபுரம் மாவட்டம் பள்ளிமடை என்ற ஊரில் உள்ளது. இக்கோயில் தற்போது காலநாதசுவாமி கோயில் என்று அழைக்கப்படுகிறது.

பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயிலின் கல்வெட்டுச் செய்திகள்

இக்கோயிலில் உள்ள கல்வெட்டுக்கள் இக்கோயிலைப் பள்ளிப்படை என்ற அடைமொழியுடன் “பள்ளிப்படை சுந்தரபாண்டிய ஈஸ்வரமுடையார் கோயில்” என அழைக்கின்றன. இக்கோயில்

மட்டுமல்லாது நம் தமிழகத்தில் இன்னும் சில கோயில் களும் இவ்வாறு அழைக்கப்படுவதற்குக் காரணம் என்ன வென்று பார்க்க வேண்டும்.

பள்ளிப்படை என்பது இறந்த உடலின் மீது அல்லது எலும்பு களின் மீது கட்டப்படும் கோயிலாகும். இறந்த மனித உடலைப் பள்ளியிலடைத்தபின் அதாவது அடக்கம் செய்தபின் (துயில் கொள்ளச் செய்தபின்) அதன் மேலே எடுக்கப்படும் கோயிலாகும். 'பள்ளியடை' என்பதே > பள்ளிப்படை என மருவி வழங்கியது போலும்.

ஆக இறைவனுக்கு எடுக்கும் கோயிலாக அல்லாமல், இறந்த மனிதர்களின் உடல் அல்லது எலும்புகள் மீது அவர்கள் நினைவாக கோயில்கட்டி வழிபடும் கோயில் பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயில் என அழைக்கப்பட்டது. வடமொழியில் இக்கோயில்களை அதீதகரம் என அழைப்பர்.

எனவே பள்ளிப்படை சுந்தரபாண்டிய ஈச்சரம் என்பது சுந்தர பாண்டியன் என்ற மன்னனைப் புதைத்த இடத்தில் எடுக்கப்பட்ட கோயில் என்பது இங்கு அறியத்தக்கதாகும்.

இனி, இக்கோயில் கல்வெட்டுச் செய்திகளைக் காண்போம். இக்கோயிலின் கருவறையில் சோழன் தலை கொண்ட வீரபாண்டியனின் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் ஆறும் சடையமாறனின் கல்வெட்டு ஒன்றும் உள்ளன.

இக்கல்வெட்டுக்களுள் காலத்தால் பழமையானது சோழன் தலை கொண்ட வீரபாண்டியனின் ஏழாம் ஆட்சியாண்டைச் சேர்ந்த கல்வெட்டாகும்.<sup>1</sup> எனவே இக்கோயில் [கி.பி. 938 + 7 = 945] கி.பி. 945 ஆம் ஆண்டிலோ அல்லது அதற்கு முன்னரோ கட்டப்பட்டுள்ளது எனலாம். பிற கல்வெட்டுக்கள் இம்மன்னனின் எட்டு, ஒன்பது, பதினொன்று, பதின்மூன்று ஆகிய ஆட்சியாண்டுகளில் பொறிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது.

இப்பள்ளிப் படைக்கோயில் பாண்டிமண்டலத்தில் பரித்திக் குடி நாட்டில் திருச்சுரியல் என்ற ஊரில் அமைந்திருந்தது என அக்கல்வெட்டுக்கள் மூலம் தெரிய வருகிறது.

**முக்கிய அதிகாரிகள்**

வீரபாண்டியன் தன் அண்ணனுக்காகக் கட்டிய இக்கோயிலுக்கு அவனது முக்கிய அதிகாரிகளும் சிறப்பு செய்திருக்கின்றனர். பொழியூர் நாட்டுப் பொழியூர் சோளாந்தக பல்லவரையனான

மாறனாதிச்சன் இக்கோயிலுக்கு நொந்தா விளக்கெரிக்க எழுபத் தைந்து ஆடுகள் கொடுத்திருக்கின்றான்.<sup>2</sup> மற்றொரு முக்கிய அதிகாரி யான அணையப்பள்ளி தென்னவனுத்திர மந்திரியும் மேலேகூறிய சோளாந்தகப் பல்லவரையனும் உடனிருந்து, இக்கோயிலுக்கு நில மளித்தற் பொருட்டு வீரபாண்டியன் இட்ட ஆணையை நிறைவேற்றிய செய்தியையும் கல்வெட்டு குறிப்பிடுகிறது. மற்றொரு அமைச்சன் பொழியூர் நாட்டு மூவேந்த வேளானாயின அரங்கம் பூதி என்பவன்.<sup>3</sup> இவன் இக்கோயிலுக்கு விளக்கெரிக்க இருபத்தைந்து ஆடுகள் கொடுத்திருக்கின்றான்.

### தேவரடியார் பெண்கள்

நம் தமிழகத்தில் உள்ள பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயில்கள் எவற்றி லும் தேவரடியார் பெண்கள் இருந்ததாகக் குறிப்பு இல்லை. ஆனால் இக் கோயிலில் ஏராளமான தேவரடியார் பெண்கள் பணிபுரிந்துள்ளனர். இவர்களில் தாய், மகள், பேத்தி ஆகிய அனைவரும் பணிபுரிந்துள்ளதாக அறியப்படுகிறது. எனவே இப் பெண்கள் மணம் செய்து கொண்டு குடும்பம் நடத்திக் கொண்டு கோயிலுக்கும் பணிபுரிந்துள்ளனர். இதைக் கொண்டு பார்க்கின்ற போது பிற பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயில்களிலும் தேவரடியார் பெண்கள் பணிபுரிந்திருத்தல் வேண்டும் என எண்ணலாம். ஆனால் அப்பள்ளிப் படைக் கோயில்களைப் பற்றி அதிகமான கல்வெட்டுக்கள் காணப் படாததால் தேவரடியார்கள் பணிபுரிந்தது பற்றிய விவரம் நமக்குத் தெரியவில்லை.

### படைத் தலைவர்கள்

இக்கோயிலுக்கு விளக்கெரிக்கக் கொடுத்த ஆடுகளைப் பெற்றுக் கொண்டு, பராமரித்து கோயிலுக்கு விளக்கெரிக்க களில் படைத்தலைவர்களும் உள்ளனர். இவ்வாறு படைத் தலைவர்கள் ஆடுகளைப் பெற்றுக் கொண்டு நெய்யளந்த செய்தி மூன்று கல்வெட்டுக்களில் கூறப்படுகிறது.

### மகாவிரதிகள்

இப் பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயிலில் மகாவிரதிகள் என்ற சைவசமயப் பெரியோர்களுக்கு மடம் அமைத்துக் கொடுக்கப்பட்டிருந்த செய்தி காணப்படுகிறது.<sup>5</sup> அவர்கள் அங்கேயே தங்கிக் கோயிலில் வழிபாடு, நிர்வாகம் ஆகியவற்றைக் கவனித்து வந்தனர். பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயில்களுக்கும் மகாவிரதிகளுக்கும் முக்கிய தொடர்பிருக்கிறது. இதுபற்றி மகாவிரதிகள் என்ற தலைப்பின் கீழ் விவரமாகக் காண்போம்,



சுடைய மாறன்:

சோழன் தலை கொண்ட வீரபாண்டியன் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் தவிர இக்கோயிலில் உள்ள மற்றும் ஒரே ஒரு கல்வெட்டு சுடையமாறன் என்ற மன்னன் காலத்தைச் சேர்ந்ததாகும்.<sup>6</sup> இக்கோயிலுக்குத் தச்சன் ஒருவன் விளக்கெரிக்க ஆடுகள் கொடுத்த செய்தி காணப்படுகிறது. மேலும் பிரம்மதேயம் வானவன் மாதேவி சபையும் குறிக்கப்படுகிறது. இக்கல்வெட்டைப் பதிப்பித்த மத்திய தொல்பொருள் ஆய்வுத்துறை, சுடைய மாறன் என்ற இந்த மன்னன் முதல் பராந்தக சோழன் காலத்தில் வாழ்ந்த மன்னனாகிய ராஜசிம்மப் பாண்டியனாக இருக்கலாம் எனக் கூறியுள்ளது. ஆனால் இம்மன்னன் தான் சோழன் தலை கொண்ட வீரபாண்டியனின் தந்தையாவான். இக்கல்வெட்டு வீரபாண்டியனின் தந்தை ராஜசிம்மப் பாண்டியனின் கல்வெட்டு அன்று. வீரபாண்டியனுக்குப் பின்னர் வாழ்ந்த சுடைய மாறன் கல்வெட்டுதான் அது என்பதைச் 'சுடையமாறன் யார்?' என்ற தலைப்பின் கீழ் விரிவாகக் கண்போம்.

அண்ணன் சுந்தரபாண்டியனும் தம்பி வீரபாண்டியனும்

வீரபாண்டியன் கி. பி. 938-இல் ஆட்சிப்பீடம் ஏறினான். கி. பி. 959-இல் மரணம் அடைந்தான். இவன் ஆட்சிக்கு வந்த மூன்றாவது ஆண்டில் வெளியிட்ட சிவகாசிச் செப்பேட்டில், தன்னை மானா பரணன் என்ற மன்னனுக்கும் சேரமன்னன் ரவியின் மகளுக்கும் பிறந்தவன் என்று கூறுகிறான். மேலும் இச்செப்பேட்டின் மூலம் மட்டும் தான் வீரபாண்டியனுக்குச் சுந்தரபாண்டியன் என்ற ஒரு அண்ணன் இருந்தான் என்றும் தெரியவருகிறது. அச்செப்பேட்டில், சுந்தரபாண்டியன் அறிஞர்களுக் கெல்லாம் புகலிடமாக விளங்கினான் என்று கூறப்படுகிறது. சுந்தரபாண்டியனைப் பற்றி மேற் கூறிய செப்பேட்டுச் செய்தியைத் தவிர வேறு ஒரு ஆதாரமும் இதுவரையில் கிடைக்கவில்லை.

இங்கு ஆய்வு செய்யப்பெறும் பள்ளி மடம் என்ற ஊரிலுள்ள கோயிலில் வீரபாண்டியனின் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் அவனது ஏழாம் ஆட்சி யாண்டு முதல் காணப்படுகின்றன. இக்கல்வெட்டுக்கள் மேற்கூறிய கோயிலைப் 'பள்ளிப்படை சுந்தர பாண்டிய ஈச்சுரம்' என்றும் வீர பாண்டியனின், 'சோழன் தலை கொண்ட வீரபாண்டியன்' என்றும்

வீரபாண்டியனுக்கு "சோழன் தலை கொண்ட" என்ற அடை மொழி அவனது ஏழாம் ஆட்சி யாண்டு முதல் தான் காணப்படுகிறது. அவனது ஆறாம் ஆட்சியாண்டு வரையில் வெட்டப்பட்ட கல்வெட்டுக்

கள் அனைத்தும் அவனை 'மாறஞ்சடையன்' என்றே குறிப்பிடுகிறது. ஆறாம் ஆட்சியாண்டின் இறுதியில் அல்லது ஏழாம் ஆட்சியாண்டின் தொடக்கத்தில் சோழ மன்னனைக் கொன்று வெற்றி கண்ட பின்னரே, சோழன் தலை கொண்ட வீரபாண்டியன் என்ற பெயர் அவனுக்கு வழங்கியது.

வீரபாண்டியனின் சிவகாசிச் செப்பேடு அவனது மூன்றாம் ஆட்சியாண்டில் அதாவது கி. பி. 941-இல் வெளியிடப்பட்டது என கண்டோம். அப்போதே அவன் அண்ணன் சுந்தரபாண்டியன் உயிருடன் இல்லை எனத் தெரிகிறது. அண்ணன் சுந்தரபாண்டியன் இறந்த பின்னரே தம்பி வீரபாண்டியன் முடிசூடியிருக்க வேண்டும். எனவே சுந்தரபாண்டியன் கி.பி. 938 ஜூலைக்கு முன்னர் இறந்திருத்தல் வேண்டும்.

பள்ளிப்படை சுந்தரபாண்டிய ஈச்சரம் என்ற கோயிலில் காணப்படும் வீரபாண்டியனின் கல்வெட்டுக்களுள் காலத்தால் முந்தியது அவனது ஏழாம் ஆட்சியாண்டு (கி. பி. 945) கல்வெட்டு எனக் கண்டோம் ... எனவே வீரபாண்டியன், கி.பி. 938-ல் இறந்த தன் அண்ணனின் நினைவாக கி.பி. 945-ல் பள்ளிப்படைக்கோயில் கட்டி வழிபட்டிருக்கிறான்

இவர்களது தந்தை இராஜசிம்மபாண்டியனின் கல்வெட்டு பாண்டிய நாட்டில் கி. பி. 930 வரை கிடைக்கிறது. இவனை வெற்றி கண்டு இலங்கைக்கு ஓடச் செய்த சோழ மன்னன் முதலாம் பராந்தக சோழனாவான் இவனது கல்வெட்டு பாண்டி நாட்டில் கி.பி. 927 முதல் கிடைக்கிறது. ஆக, சோழன் பாண்டி நாட்டினை வெற்றி கண்ட பின்னரும் அவர்கள் ஆட்சியை நிறுவ முடியாத படி இராஜசிம்மன் மூன்றாண்டுகள் போராடிய பின்னரே இலங்கைக்குச் சென்றிருக்கிறான்.

இராஜசிம்மபாண்டியனுக்குப் பிறகு நமக்கு வீரபாண்டியன் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் தாம் கி.பி. 938-ல் கிடைக்கின்றன. எனவே வீரபாண்டியன் கி.பி. 938-ல் முடிசூடியிருக்கின்றான். பாண்டிய நாட்டை வென்ற சோழன் முதலாம் பராந்தகனின் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் கி.பி. 941 வரை கிடைக்கின்றன. எனவே வீரபாண்டியன் தான் முடிசூடிய மூன்றாண்டுகளுக்குள் சோழர்களைப் பாண்டி நாட்டை விட்டே துரத்தியிருக்கிறான். தோற்றோடிய சோழர்கள் வாளாயிருக்காது தொடர்ந்து பாண்டியனுடன் போரிட்டு வந்தனர். கி. பி. 944-ல் வீரபாண்டியன், சோழன் முதலாம் பராந்தகன் மகன் இளவரசன் உத்தம சீலியைக் கொன்று தன்னைச் சோழன் தலை கொண்ட வீரபாண்டியன் என அழைத்துக் கொண்டான். ஆகவேதான் அவனது

கல்வெட்டுக்கள் கி.பி. 945-முதல் சோழன் தலை கொண்ட வீரபாண்டியன் என்ற பெயருடன் காணப்படுகின்றன.

இராஜசிம்மப்பாண்டியனின் ஆட்சியின் முடிவு கி.பி. 930 என்றும், வீரபாண்டியனின் ஆட்சியின் தொடக்கம் கி.பி. 938 என்றும் கண்டோம். இடைப்பட்ட எட்டாண்டுகள் கேள்விக் குறியை எழுப்புகின்றன.

வீரபாண்டியன், தனக்கு ஒரு அண்ணன் இருந்ததையும் அவன் அறிஞர்களுக்கெல்லாம் புகலிடமாக இருந்தான் என்பதையும் கூறியிருக்கின்றதைப் பார்த்தால் அவன் முடிசூட்டு முன்னரே இறந்தவனல்லன் ஆட்சி புரிந்து கொண்டிருக்கும்போதே இறந்து விட்டவன் என்பதைத்தான் அச்செய்திகள் உணர்த்துகின்றன. எனவே இராஜசிம்மப்பாண்டியன் கி.பி. 930-ல் இலங்கைச் சென்ற பின்னர் அவனது மூத்த மகன் சுந்தரபாண்டியன் பாண்டி நாட்டு மக்களுக்கு மன்னனாக விளங்கியிருத்தல் வேண்டும். இக்காலங்களில் பாண்டி நாட்டுக்கும் சோழ நாட்டிற்கும் ஏற்பட்ட இடைவிடாத போர்களின் குழப்பத்தால் சுந்தரபாண்டியன் காலத்தில் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் பொறிக்கப்பட வேண்டிய குழல் இல்லாமல் போயிருந்திருக்க வேண்டும்.

சுந்தரபாண்டியனின் இறப்புக் காரணம் பாண்டி நாட்டுக்கும் சோழ நாட்டிற்கும் இடையில் ஏற்பட்டிருந்த இடைவிடாத போராகத் தானிருந்திருக்க வேண்டும். இவனது பள்ளிப்படைக்கோயில் அமைந்திருக்கும் அமைவிடத்தைப் பார்க்கின்றபோதும் அப்படித்தான் காட்சியளிக்கிறது.

எந்தச் சோழ மன்னன் தன் அண்ணன் சுந்தரபாண்டியனின் இறப்புக்குக் காரணமாக அமைந்தானோ அந்த சோழனைப் பாண்டிய நாட்டை விட்டுத் துரத்திய பின் அவன் மகனைப் போரில் கொன்று பழிக்குப்பழி வாங்கியபின், சோழன் தலை கொண்ட வீரபாண்டியன் என சிறப்புப் பெயர் பெற்றான். வீரபாண்டியன் கி.பி. 938-ல் இறந்த தன் தமையனுக்கு கி.பி. 945-இல் பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயில் எடுத்து வழிபட்டிருக்கிறான் மாபெரும் வீரனான இத்தனயன் வீரபாண்டியன்.

சோழர்களை வென்ற வீரபாண்டியன், சோழனை அந்தகம் செய்தவன்—அதாவது சோழனை அழித்தவன் என்னும் பொருள்பட 'சோளாந்தகன்' என்ற பெயரையும் பெற்றிருந்தான். இதுபோலவே இப்போரில் கலந்துகொண்டு வீரபாண்டியனுக்குப் படைநடத்தி வெற்றி தேடித்தந்த படைத்தளபதிகளும் சோளாந்தகன் என்ற விருதுப் பெயர்களைப் பெற்றிருந்தனர்.

உதாரணமாக...பொழியூர் நாட்டுப் பொழியூர் தென்னவன் பல்ல வரையனாயின மாறனாச்சன்<sup>7</sup> என்பவன்—பொழியூர் நாட்டுப் பொழியூர் சோழாந்தகப் பல்லவரையனாயின மாறனாச்சன்<sup>8</sup>— என வழங்கப்பட்டான். இப்பெயரை வேறு சில அதிகாரிகளும் பெற்றிருத் தனர்—வீரபாண்டியனின் அம்பாசமுத்திரம் கல்வெட்டில்—சோழாந் தகப் பிரம்மராயன்<sup>9</sup>— என்பவனும் சுசீந்திரம் கல்வெட்டில்—சோழாந் தாகப் பிரம்மராயன் வங்கன்ற தேவர்<sup>10</sup>— என்பவனும் இப்பள்ளிப் படைக் கோயிலில் கல்வெட்டில்—சோழாந்தகப் பிரம்மராயனான நாராயணன் ஸ்ரீ மாதவன் என்பவனும் குறிக்கப்படுகின்றனர்.

இந்திகழ்ச்சிக்குப் பிறகு பாண்டி நாட்டில் நிலவிய முகத்தலளவை ஒன்று 'சோழந்தக நாராயன்'<sup>12</sup> என வழங்கியது.

வீரபாண்டியனின் அதிகாரிகளுள் ஒருவனாகிய தென்னவன் தமிழவேளாகிய கண்டஞ் சாத்தன் என்பவன், கீழ்மாத்தூர் என்ற ஊரில் ஸ்ரீகண்டேஸ்வரம் என்ற கோயிலை எடுப்பித்து அதற்கு ஏற்படுத்திய நந்தவனத்திற்குச் சோழாந்தகன்<sup>13</sup> எனப் பெயரிட்டு மகிழ்ந்தான்.

மேலும் வீரபாண்டியன், சோழாந்தகச் சதுர்வேதி மங்கலம் என மதுரை அருகே உள்ள ஒரு ஊருக்குப் பெயரிட்டு அந்தணர்களுக்குத் தானமாக அளித்தான். அவ்வூரே தற்போது சோழவந்தான் என மருவி வழங்குகிறது. அவ்வூரில் தன் பெயர்களுள் ஒன்றாகிய வீர கேரளன் என்ற பெயரில் வீரகேரள விண்ணகரம்<sup>14</sup> என்ற கோயிலையும் எடுத்ததற்கான தடயங்கள் உள்ளன.

**சடையமஹன் யார் ?**

பள்ளிப்படை சுந்தரபாண்டிய ஈச்சரமுடையார் கோயிலில் வீர பாண்டியன் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் ஆறும் சடையமாறன் கல்வெட்டு ஒன்றும் உள்ளன எனக் கண்டோம்.

இவர்கள் இருவரில் இக்கோயிலைக் கட்டியவன் 'வீரபாண்டியன் எனக் கண்டோம். இக்கோயிலின் சிறப்பு இது ஒரு பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயில் என்பதுதான். இக்கோயிலில் காணப்படும் சடையமாறன் கல்வெட்டு ஒன்று மட்டுமே என அறிவோம். இந்த ஒரு கல்வெட்டும் 'பள்ளிப்படை' என்பதை விட்டு விட்டு 'சுந்தரபாண்டிய ஈச்சரம்' என்று மட்டுமே குறிக்கிறது. எனவே, 'பள்ளிப்படை' என முன்னரே பல கல்வெட்டுக்கள் குறித்திருக்கின்ற காரணத்தினால்தான் பின்னர் பொறிக்கப்பட்ட கல்வெட்டில் அவ்வார்த்தையை விட்டுவிட்டுப்

பொறித்துள்ளனர். எனவே சடையமாறன், வீரபாண்டியனுக்குப் பிற்பட்டவனே என்பது இக்கட்டுரைபாசிரியரின் கருத்து.

ஆனால் இக் கல்வெட்டைப்பதிப்பித்த மத்திய தொல்பொருள் ஆய்வுத்துறை, இம்மன்னனை இராஜசிம்மன் என்று கூறுகிறது. அவனது தாய் பெயரில் 'பிரமதேயம்' 'வானவன் மாதேவி' என்ற ஊர் குறிக்கப்படுவதாலும் சடைய மாறன் என்ற பெயரில் வீரபாண்டியனுக்குப் பிறகு ஒரு மன்னன் வாழ்ந்திருந்தான் என்பதற்கு அதுவரை ஆதாரங்கள் கிடைக்காததாலும் அவ்வாறு கூறினர் போலும்.

இக்கல்வெட்டு சடையமாறனின் இரண்டாம் ஆட்சியாண்டைச் சேர்ந்தது. இக் கல்வெட்டு இராஜசிம்மப் பாண்டியன் காலத்தைச் சார்ந்தது என்றால் கி.பி. 913 லே (கி.பி. 911+2=கி.பி. 913) யே அவனது முதல் மகன் சுந்தரபாண்டியன் இறந்து விட்டான் எனப் பொருளாகிறது. தந்தையின் ஆரம்ப ஆட்சி காலத்திலேயே இறந்து விட்ட ஒருவன்--அறிஞர்களுக்கு புகலிடமாக இருக்கும் அளவில் வாழ்ந்திருக்க முடியுமா என்பது கேள்விக் குறியாகும்.

வீரபாண்டியனுக்குப் பிறகு சடையமாறன் என்ற மன்னன் வாழ்ந்திருந்தான் என்பதைச் சில கல்வெட்டுக்கள் மூலம் உறுதிப்படுத்தலாம்.

1. சடையமாறனின் இரண்டாம் ஆட்சியாண்டைச் சேர்ந்த இரு கல்வெட்டுக்கள் இராமநாதபுரம் மாவட்டம் திருப்பூவணம் என்ற ஊரில் கிடைத்துள்ளன. இக்கல்வெட்டுக்களைக் கண்டுபிடித்து பதிப்பித்துள்ள திரு. வேதாசலம், இவ்விரு கல்வெட்டுக்களும் இராஜசிம்மப் பாண்டியன் காலத்தைச் சார்ந்தது என்று கூறுகிறார்.<sup>15</sup> ஆனால் இக்கல்வெட்டுக்களை ஆய்ந்த திரு. என். சேதுராமன் அவர்கள், இக்கல்வெட்டுக்கள் ஒன்றில் 'வீரபாண்டிய வீணைமாராயனாகிய வீரநாராயணன்' என்ற பெயர் காணப்படுவதால் இக்கல்வெட்டுக்கள் வீரபாண்டியனுக்குப் பின்னர் வாழ்ந்த சடையமாறன் காலத்தைச் சேர்ந்தது என்றும் சடையமாறனாகிய இராஜசிம்மனின் காலத்தைச் சேர்ந்தது அல்ல என்றும் தெளிவாகக் கூறினார். மேலும் இக்கல்வெட்டில் 'வீரபாண்டிய வீணைமாராயன்' என்ற பெயரோடு வீரபாண்டியனின் மற்றொரு பெயரான 'வீரநாராயணன்' என்பதும் இணைந்து வரும் சுசீந்திரம் கல்வெட்டையும் சுட்டிக்காட்டினார். அக்கல்வெட்டில்,

‘தென்னவன் அணுக்கப்பல்லவரையனான  
அரையன் வீரநாராயணன்’

என்பவன் குறிக்கப்படுகிறான்.<sup>16</sup> மன்னர்களின் சிறப்புப் பெயர்களை அதிகாரிகளும் வைத்துக் கொள்ளுதல் மரபு. இக்கல்வெட்டைப்

பதிப்பித்த டி.ஏ. கோபிநாதராவ் அவர்கள். வீரபாண்டியனுக்கு வீரநாராயணன் என்ற பெயர் இருந்தது என்றும் அவனது பாட்டன் பராந்தக வீரநாராயணன் பெயர் இவனுக்கு வைக்கப் பட்டிருத்தல் வேண்டும் என்றும் கூறுகிறார். எனவே திருபூவணம் கல்வெட்டுக் குறிப்பிடும் அதிகாரியான 'வீரபாண்டிய வீணை மாராயனாகிய வீர நாராயணன்' வீரபாண்டியனுக்குப்பிறகு வாழ்ந்த சடையமாறன் காலத்தவனே. முற்கால பாண்டியர்களுள் எவரும் சோழன் தலை கொண்ட வீரபாண்டியனுக்கு முன்னர் வீரபாண்டியன் என்ற பெயரைக் கொண்டிருக்கவில்லை என்பதும் இங்குக் குறிப்பிடத்தக்கது.

தந்தை காலத்தில் மகன் பெயரினை அதிகாரிகள் கொண்டு திகழ்ந்ததும் உண்டு. ஆனால் இக்கல்வெட்டில் குறிக்கப்படும் இவனது இரண்டு பெயர்களான வீரபாண்டியன், வீரநாராயணன் என்பனவற்றில், தன்பாட்டன் பெயராகிய வீரநாராயணன் என்ற பெயரே இவனது இயற்பெயராக இருந்திருத்தல் வேண்டும். வீரபாண்டியன் என்ற பெயர் இவனது அபிஷேகப் பெயராக இருத்தல் வேண்டும். அதாவது முடி சூட்டப்படும் போது கொடுக்கப்பட்ட பெயராக இருத்தல் வேண்டும். இவனது சிவகாசிச் செப்பேட்டில் 'வீரபாண்டியன் வீரகேரளன், வினைய கஞ்சகன் விசால சீலன்' என்று வரிசையாக அவனது சிறப்புப் பெயர்களைக் கூறுவதால் முடி சூட்டப்பட்டபிறகு ஏற்பட்ட பெயரே வீரபாண்டியன் என்பது தெளிவு. எனவே கி.பி. 938-ல் முடி சூட்டப்பட்டபிறகு ஏற்பட்ட பெயரே வீரபாண்டியன் என்ற பெயர். தன் தந்தையின் இரண்டாம் ஆட்சி யாண்டிலேயே அவனுக்கு [கி.பி. 913-ல்] வழங்கியிருக்க நியாய மில்லை. எனவே திருபூவணம் கல்வெட்டு உறுதியாக வீரபாண்டியனுக்குப் பின்னர் வாழ்ந்த மன்னன் காலத்தைச் சேர்ந்ததே.

(2) நெல்லை மாவட்டம் திருப்புடைமருதூர் என்ற ஊரிலுள்ள சடையமாறனது 20-ம் ஆட்சியாண்டு கல்வெட்டு ஒன்று,

“பாண்டி மாத்தாண்ட வளநாட்டு மலயமாதேவிபுரத்து வீர பாண்டிய.....”<sup>17</sup> என்று உள்ளது.

இதே மாவட்டத்திலுள்ள பெருங்குளம் என்ற ஊரிலுள்ள வீர பாண்டியனின் கல்வெட்டு ஒன்று, 'பாண்டி மாத்தாண்ட பல்ல வரையன்'<sup>18</sup> —என்ற அதிகாரியைக் குறிப்பிடுகிறது.

மன்னின் சிறப்புப் பெயர்களை அதிகாரிகளும் பூண்டிருந்தனர் எனக்கண்டோம். எனவே இக்கல்வெட்டின் மூலம் பாண்டி மாத்தாண்டன் என்ற பெயரையும் வீரபாண்டியன் பூண்டிருந்தான் என்பது தெளிவு.

அப்படியென்றால் திருப்புடைமருதூர் சடையமாறனின் கல் வெட்டில் குறிக்கப்படும் நாட்டுப் பிரிவின் பெயரான - பாண்டி மாத் தாண்டவன நாடு—என்பது வீரபாண்டியன் காலத்தில் அல்லது அதற்குப் பின்னர்தான் ஏற்படுத்தப் பட்டிருத்தல் வேண்டும். ஆக, அக்கல்வெட்டில் குறிக்கப்படும் மன்னன் சடையமாறன் வீரபாண்டியனுக்குப் பின்னர்தான் வாழ்ந்திருத்தல் வேண்டும்.

வீரபாண்டியனுக்குப்பின்னர் சடையமாறன் என்ற பெயரில் ஒரு மன்னன் வாழ்ந்திருந்தான் என திருபூவணம், திருவிடைமருதூர் கல்வெட்டுக்கள் உறுதிப்படுத்திவிட்டன. எனவே பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயிலில் காணப்படும் சடையமாறனும் வீரபாண்டியனுக்குப் பின்னர் ஆட்சி புரிந்தவனே. இவன் வீரபாண்டியனின் மகனாக இருத்தல் வேண்டும்.

**வீரபாண்டியன் மகன்**

பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயிலில் காணப்படும் சடையமாறன், வீர பாண்டியனின் மகனாக இருத்தல் வேண்டும் எனக் கண்டோம்.

பாண்டியர்களின் சிம்மாசனப் பெயர்களாகிய

மாறஞ்சடையன்

சடையமாறன்

என்பதில் தந்தை மாறஞ்சடையன் என்றால் மகன் சடையமாறன் என பெயரைக் கொண்டிருப்பர். அது போல வீரபாண்டியனின் கல் வெட்டுக்கள் மாறஞ்சடையன் என்ற பெயரிலும் பொறிக்கப் பட்டிருந்தது எனக் கண்டோம். எனவே அவன் மகன் 'சடையமாறன்'— என்ற பெயரினைக் கொண்டிருந்தான் எனத்தெரிகிறது.

இவனது கல்வெட்டுக்கள் பல ஊர்களில் கிடைக்கிறது என்றால் இவனது இயற்பெயர் எதுவாக இருக்கும்? அதற்கு ஆதாரம் ஏதேனும் உள்ளதா என்ற கேள்வி எழும்.

நெல்லை மாவட்டம் அம்பாசமுத்திரத்திலுள்ள வீரபாண்டியனின் 12-வது ஆட்சியாண்டுக் கல்வெட்டில்<sup>19</sup> மூன்று அதிகாரிகள் குறிக்கப் படுகின்றனர்.

1. அரையன் மானாபரணன்
2. சோளாந்தக பிரம்மராயர்
3. விக்கிரம பாண்டிய மூவேந்தவேளான்

இவர்களில் அரையன் மானாபரணன் என்பவன் வீரபாண்டியனின் தந்தை இராஜசிம்மனாகிய மானாபரணன் பெயரைக் கொண்டவன்.

சோளாந்தக பிரம்மராயர்-என்பவன் வீரபாண்டியனின் பெயரைக் கொண்டவன்.

மூன்றாமவன் விக்கிரம பாண்டிய மூவேந்த வேளான். விக்கிரம பாண்டியன் என்ற பெயரில் வீரபாண்டியன் காலம் வரையில் எந்த மன்னனும் இருந்ததில்லை எனவே இந்த விக்கிரம பாண்டியன் என்ற பெயரினை உடையவன், வீரபாண்டியனின் மகனாகிய சடைய மாறனே என்றும் அவனது இயற் பெயர் விக்கிரமபாண்டியன் என்றும் கருதுகிறார், குப்பகோணம் திரு. என். சேதுராமன் அவர்கள்.

நெல்லை மாவட்டத்திலுள்ள ஆத்தூர் என்ற ஊரில் சடைய மாறனது கல்வெட்டு<sup>20</sup> ஒன்று உள்ளது. இக்கல்வெட்டில்<sup>1</sup> விக்கிரம மகாமுக பல்லவரையனான தேவன் சோலை என்பவன் குறிக்கப்படுகிறான்.<sup>2</sup> இவ்வூர் சடைய மாறன் கல்வெட்டில் தென்திருபூவணம் எனக் குறிக்கப்படுகிறது.<sup>3</sup> இக் கல்வெட்டு உள்ள கோயிலின் பெயர் திரு. நாராயண விண்ணகர். ஆக இக் கல்வெட்டில் அதிகாரியின் பெயர் விக்கிரம மகாமுக பல்லவரையன் எனக் குறிக்கப்படுவதால் வீர பாண்டியனின் மகன் கல்வெட்டாக இருத்தல் வேண்டும். இராம நாதபுரம் மாவட்டம் திருபூவணத்தில் இவனது இரு கல்வெட்டுக்களை முன்னர்கண்டோம். அதுபோல இவன் நெல்லை மாவட்டத்தில் தன் தந்தையின் (வீர பாண்டியன்) இயற் பெயரில் திரு. நாராயண விண்ணகரம் என்ற கோயிலை எழுப்பி இவ்வூரைத் தென் திருபூவணம் என்று அழைத்திருக்கவேண்டும். எனவே—வீரபாண்டியனின் மகனான சடையமாறன்—விக்கிரம பாண்டியன் என்ற பெயரினை உடையவன் என்ற திரு. என். சேதுராமன் அவர்கள் கருத்து ஆத்தூர் கல்வெட்டால் உறுதிப்படுகிறது.

**பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயிலின் கட்டிட அமைப்பு**

பாண்டி நாட்டில் முற்காலப் பாண்டியர் கோயில்கள் தேவ கோஷ்டமின்றி சாதாரண கட்டிட அமைப்பில் காணப்படும். அது போலவே இக் கோயிலும் காணப்படுகிறது. இக்கோயில் கருவறை, அர்த்த மண்டபம், மகா மண்டபம் என அமைந்துள்ளது.

இக்கோயிலின் கருவறையில்தான் சோழன் தலை கொண்ட வீரபாண்டியன் கல்வெட்டுக்களும், அவன் மகன் சடையமாறன் கல்வெட்டும் காணப்படுகின்றன.

**மகாமண்டபக் கல்வெட்டுக்கள்**

இக்கோயில் மகா மண்டபத்தில் நான்கு கல்வெட்டுகள் காணப்படுகின்றன.<sup>21</sup> இவற்றில் இரண்டு கல்வெட்டுக்கள் மாறஞ்சடையன்



என்ற மன்னனைக் குறிப்பிடுகிறது. ஆனால் எழுத்தமைதியைக் கொண்டு பார்க்கும் போது இம்மன்னன் வீரபாண்டியனுக்கு முன்னர் வாழ்ந்தவன். மீதமுள்ள இரு கல்வெட்டுக்களில் மன்னன் பெயர் குறிக்கப்படாவிட்டாலும் கல்வெட்டுச் செய்தி, ஆட்சியாண்டு, எழுத்தமைதி ஆகியவற்றினைக் கொண்டு பார்க்கின்ற போது அவையும் மாறஞ்சடையன் காலத்தைச் சேர்ந்தனவே என எண்ணலாம்.

இந்த நான்கு கல்வெட்டுக்களும், வெண்டி நாட்டில் உள்ள குறண்டி என்ற ஊரில் உள்ள திருக்காட்டாம்பள்ளி என்ற சமணக் கோயிலுக்குக் கொடுக்கப்பட்ட கொடையைக் குறிக்கின்றன. எனவே இக்கல்வெட்டுக்கள், பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயிலைச் சேர்ந்த தல். இக்கோயிலுக்கு அருகாமையில் அமைந்திருந்த சமண மதக் கோயிலைச் சேர்ந்தது. மேலும் அக்கல்வெட்டுக்கள் வீரபாண்டியனுக்கு முன்னர் வாழ்ந்த மாறஞ்சடையன் காலத்தைச் சேர்ந்தது என்பதால் மாறஞ்சடையனாகிய இரண்டாம் வரகுணன் அல்லது அவன் தம்பி பராந்தக வீரபாண்டியன் காலத்தைச் சார்ந்ததாக இருக்கலாம். இந்த இருவரில் வரகுணன் பரமசிவ பக்தன். தம்பி பராந்தக வீரநாராயணனே சமணக் கோயிலுக்கும் பல அறக் கொடைகள் செய்தவன் என அவன் கல்வெட்டுக்களை ஆய்ந்தபோது தெரியவந்தது. மேலும் பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயிலிலுள்ள வீரபாண்டியன் மகன் சடையமாறன் கல்வெட்டில், 'பிரமதேயம் வானவன் மாதேவி'—என்ற ஊர் குறிக்கப்பட்டது என முன்னர் கண்டோம். இவ்வூரும் குறண்டி சமணக் கோயில் அமைந்திருந்த அதே வெண்டி நாட்டில்தான் அமைந்திருந்தது. இந்த வானவன் மாதேவி என்ற அரசி — பராந்தக வீர நாராயணனின் தேவியேயாகும். எனவே சமணக் கோயிலைச் சேர்ந்த இந்தக் கல்வெட்டுக்களில் குறிக்கப்படும் மாறஞ்சடையன் பராந்தக வீரபாண்டியனே எனத் தெரியலாம்.

பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயிலைக் கட்டுவதற்குக் குறண்டி திருக்காட்டாம்பள்ளியின் மேற்கூறிய கல்வெட்டுக்கள் பொறித்த கட்டிடப் பகுதி பயன்படுத்தப்பட்டிருக்கிறது எனத் தெரிய வருகிறது. எனவே வீரபாண்டியன் காலத்தில் சமண மதம் செல்வாக்கிழந்து விட்டது போலும். இவ்வாறு திடீரென்று சமண மதத்தின் அழிவிற்கு காரணம் இருத்தல் வேண்டும். அதனை அடுத்து காணலாம்.

**தமிழகத்தில் சமண மதத்தின் வீழ்ச்சிக்குக் காரணம்**

தமிழகத்தில் கி.பி. 6-ம் நூற்றாண்டு வரை சமண மதம் மிகுந்த செல்வாக்குப் பெற்றுத் திகழ்ந்தது. சமணர்கள் பள்ளிகளையும் பாழிகளையும் நிறுவி தம் மதங்களை வளர்த்தனர். அவர்களின் பொது

நலச் சேவையும் தன்னலமற்ற உணர்வும் மக்களைக் கவர்ந்தன. மக்கள் சமண மதத்தில் ஈடுபாடு கொண்டு திகழ்ந்தனர். நாட்டின் பொருளாதாரம் சமணர்களிடமே இருந்தது. காரணம் பெரும் பெரும் வணிகர்கள் சமண மதத்திற்கு ஆதரவு அளித்ததே—என்ற இக்கருத்துக்களைப் பேராசிரியர் திரு. க. கைலாசபதி அவர்களும் தமது ‘பண்டைத்தமிழர் வாழ்வும் வழிபாடும் என்ற நூலில் குறிப்பிடுகிறார்.

ஆனால் அப்பரும் சம்பந்தரும் சமண மதத்தை வீழ்த்தி சைவ மதத்திற்குப் புத்துணர்ச்சியைக் கொடுக்க முயற்சிக்கும் போது சமணர்கள் கொண்டு குவிக்கப்பட்டனர். பள்ளிகள் சூறையாடப்பட்டன. 6, 7-ம் நூற்றாண்டில் சமண மதம் பேரழிவுக்குட்பட்டது. அவ்வாறு சமண மதத்தை அழிக்க அப்பரும் சம்பந்தரும் வடநாட்டுச் சைவ மதமாகிய பாசுபத, காளாமுக, காபாலிக சமயத்தின் தத்துவத் தினைப் பின்பற்றினர். மேற்கூறிய மூன்று பிரிவில் காபாலிகமே கொடூரமான வழிபாட்டினை உடையது. இவர்கள் உக்கிரமான அக்கடவுளுக்குப் பலி கொடுத்து. மனிதப் பலி கொடுத்துங்கூட வழிபடும் பிரிவினர். எனவே வைதீக சைவ மதத்தோடு—உக்கிரமான சைவமதம் கலந்தது. இறைவனைப் பாசுபதா—கால காலா—கால பைரவா என்றெல்லாம் பாடினர் சமணர்களை இந்த காபாலிகர் கூட்டுடன் கொண்டு குவித்தனர். சமணக் கோயில்கள் அழிவுக்குட்பட்டன. இக்காலகட்டத்திலிருந்து தொடர்ந்து இந்த சைவ—சமணப் போராட்டம் நடைபெற்று வந்தது. இதன் அடிப்படையில் தான் குறண்டி திருக்காட்டம் பள்ளி—என்ற சமணக் கோயில் வீர பாண்டியன் காலத்தில் இடிக்கப்பட்டு—காபாலிகக் கடவுளுக்கு—எடுக்கப்பட்ட பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயில் அமைக்கப்பட்டது என்ற வரலாற்று உண்மை இங்கு அறிந்து கொள்ள வேண்டிய ஒன்றாகும்.

**பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயில்களும் மகாவிரதிகளும்**

1. பள்ளிப்படை சுந்தரபாண்டிய ஈச்சுர முடையார் கோயிலில் மகா கள் தங்கும் மடமும் இருந்தது எனக் கண்டோம்.

2. சோழ மன்னன் முதலாம் ஆதித்ய சோழன் தொண்டை மண்டலத்திலுள்ள தொண்டைமான் பேராற்றுார் என்னும் இடத்தில் இறந்தான். இவன் நினைவாக இவன் மகன் முதலாம் பராந்தக சோழன் தன் தந்தை பெயரில் கோதண்ட ராமேஸ்வரம்<sup>22</sup> என்னும் பெயரில் பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயில் எடுத்து வழிபட்டான். திருவிழாக்கள் நடத்தவும் மகாவிரதிகள் உள்ளிட்ட அறு சமயத்தவசிகள் 200 பேர்,

பிராமணர் 300 பேர், பக்தரான பல சமயத்தவர் 500 பேர் ஆக ஆயிரம் பேர் உண்ணவும் மன்னனால் நிவந்தம் அளிக்கப்பட்டிருந்தது. இக் கோயிலில் வாகீஸ்வர பண்டிதபடாரர் என்னும் குரு, கோயிற் காரியங்களைக்கவனித்து வந்தார்.

3. முதலாம் பராந்தக சோழன் மகன் அரிஞ்சய சோழனுக்கும் அவன் பேரன் முதலாம் இராஜராஜ சோழன் பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயில் எடுத்தான். இக்கோயிலே அரிஞ்சய ஈஸ்வரம் ஆகும். இக்கோயில் வடாற்காடு மாவட்டம் மேற்பாடி என்னும் ஊரிலுள்ளது.

இக்கோயிலில் உள்ள முதலாம் இராஜேந்திர சோழனின் கல் வெட்டு 'மடமுடையே இலகுளீஸ்வர பண்டிதர் கந்மிகளைக்<sup>23</sup> குறிப்பிடுகிறது.

4. முதலாம் இராஜராஜ சோழனின் தேவி பஞ்சவன் மாதேவி இறந்தபின் முதலாம் இராஜேந்திர சோழன் தன் சிற்றன்னையின் நினைவாக கும்பகோணம் அருகேயுள்ள பட்டசுவரத்தில் பஞ்சவன் மாதேவீஸ்வரம் என்னும் பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயிலை எடுத்தான்.

இக்கோயிலிலும் மடாதிபதி இலகுளீசுவர பண்டிதர் என்பவர் இவ்வாலயத்தை மேற்பார்வை செய்து வந்தார் என்ற செய்தி காணப்படுகிறது.

ஆக, பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயில்களில் எல்லாம் மகா இலகுளீச பண்டிதர்களும் மடங்களை அமைத்துக் கொண்டு கோயிற் காரியங்களைக் கவனித்து வந்திருக்கின்றனர். அவர்கள் யார்? அவர்களுக்கும் பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயிலுக்கும் உள்ள தொடர்புதான் என்ன? என்ற கேள்விகள் நம் முன் எழும்.

வாரணாசி (காசி), ராடதேசம் (ஓரிஸ்ஸா) ஆகிய இடங்களில் மடங்களை அமைத்துக் கொண்டு சைவ மதத்தைப் பரப்பி வந்தவர்கள் பாசுபத, காளாமுக காபாலிகப் பிரிவினர். பாசுபதர், காளா முகர் ஆகியோருக்குக்குரு லகுளீசர். இவர்கள் இருபிரிவினரின் சித்தாந்தமும் லகுளீசர் வகுத்த சித்தாந்தமே. இந்த இரு பிரிவினருக்கும் இடையே உள்ள வேறுபாடுகள் மிகக் குறைவு.

ஆனால் காபாலிகர்கள் மேற் கூறிய இருபிரிவினரிலும் முற்றிலும் வேறுபட்டவர்கள். மது, மாமிசம், மங்கை இவைகளுடன் தான் வழிபாடு நடத்துவார்கள். இவர்கள் வணங்கும் இறைவன் அழிக்கும் தன்மையுடைய சிவன். சிவனின் மிகக் கொடூரமான உருவமாகிய பைரவர், மகா பைரவர் போன்ற உருவங்களையே வணங்குவர். உடலெங்கும்

நீறு பூசி, மண்டை ஓடுகளைத் தரித்து வாழ்பவர்கள் இவர்கள். இவர்களது சித்தாந்தம் சோம சித்தாந்தம்.

அப்பர் சம்பந்தர் காலத்திற்கு சற்று முன்னர் தமிழகத்தில் நுழைந்த இம்மதங்கள் இங்கு நிலவிய வைதீக மதத்துடன் கலந்து விட்டன. இந்த சமயத்தவர்கள் தாம் மகாவிரதிகள் என்றும் இலகுளிச் சர்கள் என்றும் அழைக்கப்பட்டனர். மன்னர்கள் அம்மதத்தை வரவேற்று அச்சமயத்தவர்களை அரச குருக்களாக ஏற்றுக் கொண்டனர். இவர்களது வருகைக்குப் பிறகுதான் தமிழகத்தில் மடங்கள் என்னும் அமைப்பு காணப்படுகிறது.

காபாலிகர்களின் கடவுள், அழிக்கும் தன்மையுடைய சிவன். சுடு காட்டில் நடம் புரிபவன். உடலெங்கும் நீறு பூசி மண்டை ஓடுகளைத் தரித்துக் கொள்பவன் என்பதை அறிவோம். ஆகவே இறந்தவர்களைப் புதைத்த இடத்தில் சிவன் கோயில் எடுத்திருக்கின்றனர் என்றால், அங்கு மகாவிரதிகளும் இலகுளிச்சர்களும் பூஜை செய்து வந்தனர் என்றால், பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயில்கள் என்னும் அவ்வகைக் கோயில்கள் மயானத்தில் உரையும் காபாலிகக் கடவுளுக்கு எடுத்த கோயிலாகத் தானே இருத்தல் வேண்டும்! ஆகவே தான் அம்மதக்குருக்களே மடங்களை அமைத்துக் கொண்டு வழிபாடுகளையும் நிர்வாகத்தையும் கவனித்து வந்தனர் போலும். முதலாம் இராஜராஜ சோழனின் திருமால்புர கல்வெட்டு கூறும், “மயானத்து மடமுடைய திண்டிபிடாரர்” என்ற குறிப்பினையும் இங்குச் சிந்தித்துப் பார்த்தல் சிறப்புடையது.

கம்ப வர்மன் காலத்தில் அவனுக்குச் சிற்றரசனாக இருந்த பிரிதிவி கங்கரையர் என்ற இராசாதித்தன் இறந்த உடன் அவன் மகன் மகாதேவன் என்பவன் பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயில்<sup>24</sup> எடுத்திருக்கின்றான். இச் செய்திகளைக் கல்வெட்டு கூறும் போது, ‘தம் அப்பனாரைப் பள்ளிப்படுத்த இடத்து ஈசுவராலயமும் அதீதகரமும்’ எடுத்ததாகக் குறிக்கிறது.

இறந்த உடலைப் புதைத்த இடத்தில் அதீதகரம் என்னும் நினைவாலயத்தினையும், ஈசுவராலயம் எனும் சிவாலயத்தினையும் எடுத்திருக்கிறான்.

மேற்பாடியில் பள்ளிப்படை கோதண்டராமேஸ்வரம் தவிர சோமேஸ்வரர் கோயில் என்னும் சிவன் கோயிலும் இருந்திருக்கிறது. காபாலிகர்களின் சித்தாந்தம் சோம சித்தாந்தம். அவர்களது கடவுளுக்குச் சோமநாதர் என்றும் பெயருண்டு. எனவே மேற்பாடி

யிலுள்ள சோமேஸ்வரர்-காபாலிகக் கடவுளே. ஆகவே கம்பவர்மன் காலத்தில் மகாதேவனால் எடுக்கப்பட்ட ஈசுவராலயமும்-நினைவாலயமும் காபாலிகக் கடவுளுக்கு எடுக்கப்பட்ட கோயில்களே.

வடநாட்டில் விஜயபுரி என்னும் ஊரிலுள்ள சுடுகாட்டில் ஏராளமான பாணலிங்கம் எனும் வகையைச் சேர்ந்த லிங்கங்கள் கண்டுபிடிக்கப் பட்டுள்ளன. இந்த சுடுகாட்டிற்கருகில் போகேஸ்வரர்<sup>25</sup> என்னும் சிவன் கோயில் இருந்ததாகக் கூறப்படுவது மேற்கூறிய கருத்தினை உறுதிப்படுத்துகிறது.

எனவே இறந்தவர்களைப் புதைத்த இடங்களில் பாணலிங்கங்கள் நடப்படும் வழக்கம் இருந்திருக்கிறது. ஸ்ரீசைலம் என்னும் ஊரில் மரபுப்படி மூன்றுகோடி பாணலிங்கங்கள் இருந்ததாகக் கூறப்படுகிறது. ஸ்ரீசைலம் ஒரு சிறந்த, காபாலிக மதத்தின் மையமாகத் திகழ்ந்தது என்பதை இங்கு நினைவு கூறுதல் வேண்டும். சிவன் இறப்போடு தொடர்புடையவன் என்பதும் குறிப்பிடத்தக்கது.

ஆக, பள்ளிப்படைக் கோயில்கள் எல்லாம் அழிக்கும் தன்மையுடைய சிவனுக்கு அதாவது காபாலிகக் கடவுளுக்கு எடுக்கப்பட்ட கோயில்களே. எனவே பள்ளிப்படை சுந்தரபாண்டிய ஈசுவரமும், காபாலிக மதத்தின் தத்துவ அடிப்படையில் அமைந்த கோயிலே யாகும்.

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# **The Sculptures on the Gopuras of Madurai Minakshi-Sundaresvara Temple Complex - A Survey**

**Dr. R. Venkataraman**

The gōpura (tower-gateway) and vimāna (the towered super-structured over the sanctum) are the two exceptionally significant members of the Dravidian temple architecture. Being developed so well during many centuries of evolution, the Gopuras are the largest and architecturally the most impressive part of the South Indian temple in general. As a successor to Vimānas, the Gopuras exhibit architectonic proportions and iconographic varieties. They evolved since 11th century A.D. and reached their perfection by 17th century A.D.

This paper, based upon the field survey by the authors, attempts to throw some light on the art and architecture of the Gopuras of the Minakshi Sundaresvara temple (hereafter the Minakshi temple) at Madurai. No exhaustive survey of these Gopuras has so far been made,<sup>1</sup> not this paper in any way claims to fulfil this gap.

The city of Madurai, the second largest in the state of Tamil Nadu, is at a distance of about 500 k.m. to the south of Madras. Situated on the banks of the Vaigai, it was the capital of the Pandyas since the Sangam days and then continuously of the subsequent rulers. Thus with a continuous history for nearly 2,000 years it is at present a district headquarters as well as a pilgrim centre of repute, in view of this temple.

The Minakshi temple occupies the centre of the city, faces east and measures 852 feet east-west and 729 feet north-south. There are two main shrines—one for Śiva (or Svāmi, locally known as Sundarēśvara) and to the south of it another for Pārvaṭi (or Amman, locally known as Mīnākshi)<sup>2</sup>. Both these shrines have their own roofed enclosures, pillared halls and corridors added in course of time. The outer wall, enclosing the entire temple, is

more than 30 feet tall with four gate-ways topped by massive and elegant Gopuras at the four cardinal directions. The temple has grown in size during the course of six centuries from A.D. 1190, the date of accession of Jatavarman Kulasekhara Pandya I<sup>3</sup> and then under the Vijayanagar empire and the Nayaks of Madurai in succession.

### **Gopura: the evolution of the concept**

The Gopura derives its name from the cow-gate of the Vedic village. It was through this gate that the cows were taken out for grazing and let in through the same way. This fits in with the Saiva Siddhanta concept according to which Pati (the Lord) is in the temple which symbolises Heaven, and Pasus ('cows' or 'souls' return to Him through the Gopuras, which symbolises salvation.<sup>4</sup> Thus the very entry into temple stands for salvation.

Historically, the worship of a sacred tree constituted one of the forms of primitive Hinduism. Being hypaetherial without enclosure, it can be approached from any direction. Circumambulation being one of the forms of worship, the tree was provided with a raised platform around it for this purpose. When in the next stage of evolution an idol takes the place of a sacred tree, the former had to be installed facing a particular direction which must also be sacred. East-west orientation being sacred to the primitive consciousness, the idol was installed facing east, the direction of the sun-rise. When enclosures were put up, it had to be entered through a gate in the east or in the four cardinal directions. The devotees' movement is more regulated than restricted. Here it will be appropriate to point out the evolution of the Stupa cult of the Buddhists, who built vedikas (fences) and toranas (gates) around the Stūpas, as can be seen in Sanchi and Saranath, on the four cardinal points.

The Hindu revivalism in the north (Gupta period : 4th-5th cent A.D.) and the Bhakti movement in the south (6th-10th cent. A.D ) which were reactions to the heterodox cults, were patronised by Royal builders who first built abodes to their Gods and then enlarged them with maṇḍapas, vimana, and Gopuras, all larger than their palaces as prescribed by the śaśtras.<sup>5</sup>



Percy Brown attributes defensive purpose to the tall prakara walls and Gopuras which rise sky high.<sup>6</sup> Stella Kramrisch, linking the plan of the Indian temples to the religious and metaphysical concepts feels that the hypaetherial nature of the temples, has called for the erection of tall prākāra walls and Gopuras, meant for encasing and enclosing the Holy of the Holies at the centre.<sup>7</sup>

### **Evolution of the Structure :**

No Gopura is traceable in Tamilnadu to a date before 7th or 8th century A.D. The earliest Gopuras so far known in Dravidian temple architecture are seen in the Shore-Temple at Mamallapuram and the Kailasanatha Temple at Kanchipuram, both built during the reign of Narasimhavaram II Pallava (A.D. 691-728).

The Chōlas introduced the tradition of raising tall vimanas. At the same time all-stone Gōpuras, not so tall, were also erected. The two Gōpuras of Brihadisvara temple at Tanjore by Rajaraja - I represent a step forward in the development of the Gopura, not only for their size, but also for being the first of its type in having two Gōpuras in front of the central shrine on the same axial line. The size of the Gopuras demanded an iconography of its own. These Gopuras form the basis for many of the features of the later day Gopuras in the arrangement of the pilasters on the entryway, vestibules and superstructure one over the other having śāla and kūta haras. The builders transferred the architectural member of the vimāna to the Gōpura but in an oblong shape.

The later Chola rulers continued the tradition of erecting massive Gōpura structures with a śāla top. The finials (stūpis) on them equalled in number to (or two more than) the number of storeys in the Gopura. While the upapīṭha (base) and adhishṭhāna (main storey) are of stone, the superstructure is piled up of brick and mortar in a corbelling fashion with supportive timber pillar columns inside. The Gōpuras at Tiruvannamalai, Chidambaram, Darasuram, Tribhuvanam and Tiruvanakka all built between 11th and 13th centuries A.D. are examples of the later Chōla Gōpuras.

The Pandyas of Second empire followed the Chōlas in building Gōpuras. Their individuality is found in the formation of the capitals and corbels over the pillars and pilasters. The Vijaya-

nagar rulers and Nayaks introduced new members like Kumbha-pāñjaras and Pushpabōdhikas.

Thus from the days of Rajaraja I Chola to that of the Nayaks of Madurai, the Gōpuras evolved from the simplest form of three storeys to that of eleven storeys.

### **Architectonics of Gopura structure:**

Detailed description of the construction of Gōpuras is given in many silpa texts. In general construction stipulated for vimāna is applied to the Gōpura. Usually there is one Gōpura in front of the enclosure Wall on the axial line of the central shrine. A temple with four entrance gates (dvāras) on four cardinal directions is called Himavan<sup>8</sup> and it is a sarvatōbhadrā<sup>9</sup> type. The Gōpuras on the east and west are called after the names of the presiding deities of these directions, Indra and Varuna respectively.

The number of Gōpuras in a south Indian temple increases with the number of enclosures. However, the outermost enclosures have four Gopuras on four directions. The Tiruvannamalai Arunachalesvara temple with seven enclosures has nine Gōpurās, and the Srirangam temple with seven enclosures has twenty one Gōpuras. There are 13 Gōpuras in the Minakshi temple at Madurai in the order of 5 over the two of the swāmi shrine, three on the axial line of the amman shrine, four over the outer enclosure which covers both the shrines and one unfinished gopura outside this enclosure on the axial line of the swāmi shrine. Thus it seems that the wealth, power and the aesthetic taste of the builders as well as certain conventions ultimately decides the number and location of the Gōpuras.

When there are more than one Gōpura, as said above, the tallest are on the periphery and the height of the interior Gōpuras are in the descending order; the smallest being nearer to the vimāna. Various metaphysical interpretations are attempted for this scheme,<sup>10</sup> which may appeal to many minds similarly tuned. Historical and logical interpretations (that the aspirations, wealth or Power of the succeeding

generations of builders willing to excel their predecessors) could also be attempted. Research on these lines may give as a balanced Picture.

Silpa texts classify the Gōpuras into many categories according to the number of their storeys<sup>11</sup>. Each storey is given a name. too<sup>12</sup>.

### **Gopuras of Minakshi Temple:**

The Gōpuras of the Minakshi temple, noted for their variety, beauty and grace have been erected during the course of about four centuries since the 13th century. The chronicles of this temple, and the inscription on these Gōpuras help us in fixing the date of these edifices and their builders.

Based upon the number of their storeys, the Gōpuras of this temple can be classified into five categories as follows.

| Sl. No. | Storeys                                      | Nos. of the Gōpuras. <sup>13</sup> |
|---------|--|------------------------------------|
| 1       | The nine-storeyed outer Gōpuras              | No. 1, 2, 3, 4                     |
| 2       | The Seven-storeyed Citra-Gōpura              | No. 10                             |
| 3       | The five-storeyed inner Gōpuras              | No. 5, 6, 7, 8, 12                 |
| 4       | The three-storeyed Swāmi-sannidhi<br>Gōpura. | No. 9                              |
| 5       | The two-storeyed Amman-sannidhi<br>Gōpura.   | No. 11                             |

The unfinished Gōpura (No. 13) commenced by Tirumalai Nayak (1623-59) if completed will form the sixth category as its stone base has been so well laid as to hold on its superstructure eleven or even thirteen storeys. It is called Raja Gōpura, Had it been completed, it would have been one of the biggest Gopuras in south India.

#### **1. The four outer Gopuras (Nine tier)**

##### **a. Gopura No. 1 or East Gopura :**

Of the four outer Gopuras this is the earliest in date. With a height of 161'3" it is lesser in height than the other three. It was

commenced by Maravarman Sundara Pandya I (A.D. 1216-38) continued by Jatavarman Kulesekhera II (1236—38) and finished by Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I (1251—83)<sup>14</sup>

This Gopura seems to have been subjected to the attack of the Muslim invaders as the present edifice shows a mixture of Pandyan and Vijayanagar style in its plasters, with their lion and leonine bases respectively. "Replacements were possible without affecting the Gōpura structure because stone was used only in the facing and the solid inner parts of the Gōpura have masonry structure<sup>15</sup>. Further the wall niches show the pedestals and the stone icons on them are absent.

**b. Gopura No 3 or West Gopura :**

This is the Gōpura next in line of dating, built by one Parakrama Pandya according to local chronicles<sup>16</sup> in Saka (A. D. 1323 ) It must be Jatavarman Parakrama, who ascended the throne in A. D. 1315.

**c. Gopura No. 2 or South Gopura :**

This is the tallest (170' 6") and the most beautiful of all the Gōpuras of this temple. The curvilinear tapering of its sides is the distinguishing feature of this Gōpura. Hence the local stāpatis call it mālaikattu Gōpuram, as its curved sides resemble a garland (Tam: mālai) being hung on a deity. It was built by one Sirāmalai Sevvandi Murti Chetty in saka 1400 (A.D. 1478) according to the local chronicles<sup>17</sup>. But the editor of these works, Thiru Pandithurai Thevar corrects this date to Saka 1481 (A.D. 1559) without mentioning any source or reason for this correction. However, this correction seems acceptable in the light of the abundant late Vijayanagar and early Nayak style of architectural details of the 16th century on them<sup>18</sup>.

**d. Gopura No. 4 or North Gopura :**

It was built by Krishnappa Nayak (1572-1595) in Saka 1494 (A.D. 1572)<sup>19</sup>. Left unfinished without a sikhara, it was completed in the 19th century by Vijayanagaram Chetti family<sup>20</sup>. Hence it has come to be called mottai (tonsured, i.e. unfinished) gopuram.

## **2. The Seven-storeyed Citra-gopuram (No. 10)**

The builder of this gopura (123' -9" high) is controversial. Probably it was built by Māravarman Sundara Pandya II (A.D. 1238-1253)<sup>21</sup> and later repaired by Kālatti Mudali in Saka 1492 (A.D. 1570)<sup>22</sup> and Krishna Nayak I (1564-72)<sup>23</sup>. This gopura resembles the south outer gopura (No. 2) in its architectural style.

## **3. Five storeyed Gopuras**

### **a. Gopura No. 5:**

It is on the axial line of the Svāmi shrine over the wall in the east. It is called the gopura-nayaka gopura and was built by one Vasuvappa Nayak of Attigiri for the merit of Achuta Devaraya (A.D. 1519-1541)<sup>24</sup>.

### **b. Gopura No. 6:**

Situated in between the Amman and Svami shrine, it is called the Idaikkaṭṭu gōpura. It was constructed by Sevvandi Murti<sup>25</sup> in A.D. 1559.

### **c. Gopura No. 7:**

Called the palaka gōpura, it was built by one Mallappan in A.D. 1374. It has beautiful vyalavarl above the Kodungai, and Pandi kūdus and ganas in the entablature.

### **d. Gopura No. 8:**

Called Cinna Mottai gopuram, because of his nearness in style and distance to the North Mottai gopuram (No. 4), it is built on the wall of the second prakara of Svami shrine. It is noted for its stone iconograph. It was built by Vellappan, son of Siramalai Sevvandi Chetti in A. D. 1560 <sup>27</sup>. This gopura is also called the Ilacchinai Vayil as not has it has a bull-emblem on the door jamb<sup>28</sup>.

### **e. Goupura No. 12:**

Called Kadaka gopura, it is behind the Amman shrine, and was built by Maravarman Sundara Pandya II (A.D.1231-53)<sup>29</sup> and was repaired by Vira Tummacci<sup>30</sup> in A.D.1570 after it was badly attacked by the Muslim invaders.

#### **4. The three-storeyed Svami-sannidhi Gopura (No. 9):**

From its style this gōpura seems to be the earliest of all the thirteen gopuras of this temple. It is in front of the sanctum of the Lord. According to local legends<sup>31</sup>, it was built by one Kulasekhara Pandya, probably Jatavarman Kulasekhara I (A.D.1190-1223). "Many of the architectural elements of this gopura compare well with Chola temples. The kūṭas on the cornice and the pavilion over the niches are copies of Chōla models."<sup>32</sup>

#### **5. The two-storeyed Amman-sannidhi Gopura (No.11):**

This is the second, in the chronological sequence of the gopuras and is on the second prakara wall in front of the Amman shrine. It was built in A.D.1228 either by Ananda Tandava Nambi of Vembattur<sup>33</sup> or by his wife<sup>34</sup>.

Though all these gopuras appear alike there are differences on the basis of style. While the east (No.1) and west (No.3) gopuras are built under the later Pandyan style, the South (No.2) and the North (No.4) gopuras are under Vijayanagar style.

The base of all the gopuras are built of granite stone and the superstructure with brick and mortar.

#### **Sculptures of the Gopuras :**

Generally in all the Siva temples the cella will contain a cylindrical Linga well fixed in to the ground. It is called the mulabhera or mulavar. This is the 'form less form of God'. Then the same God as Utsavar or the processional deity will be given an anthropomorphic form and be made of Panchaloka (Popularly called 'bronze'). The niches around the outside of the garbhagraha, the pillars in the Mandapas, the Vimanas, and the Gopuras are the places filled with the different anthropomorphic forms of the deity enshrined in the cella.

The Gopuras of the Minakshi temple is famous for the multitude of sculptures, not only of Siva and Minakshi, but also at times of Vishnu, all of which fill the surface of both the main storey and the superstructure. Those in the main storey are of granite and those on the superstructure are of stucco. The stuccos,

most of them with many arms, heads and weapons are not only great works of art, but form a visual text by themselves and enable the common Hindu viewers "understand their inner significance" and metaphysical purpose "condensed in them over thousands of years of thinking and meditation"<sup>35</sup>. Thus they make an 'exöteric' as well as 'esoteric' impact on the on lookers.<sup>36</sup>

To the Hindus, as to many others, heaven is the abode of gods. When these gods are visualized as descending to earth it is but natural to honour them with seats on lofty places like mountains and hillocks. The exalted plane of the Gopuras might have appealed to the builders as suitable places to install the myriad forms of gods.

In the later Chöla temple various forms of Hindu deities are found to occupy the niches in the main storey of the Gōpuras. The superstructures were left to exhibit mostly the architectural ornamentation, with only a minimum number of stucco icons on them. But at Madurai temple, the niches on the main storey of most of the Gōpuras are found to be empty and it is over the superstructure only that one can witness a conglomeration of thousands of these images filling every space, even giving an impression of being over crowded.

The sculptures on the Gōpuras of the Minakshi temple can be broadly divided into two classes—the stone sculptures and the stucco figures.

### **Stone Sculptures :**

The niches in the main storey of the outer Gōpuras are all empty. Those in the eastern Gōpura (No. 1) seem to have been wilfully destroyed, probably by the Muslim invaders in the 14th century, because only the pedestals are found now. The northern outer Gopura (No. 4) has only stone bas-reliefs, but they are not in proportion to the size of the Gōpura<sup>37</sup>.

The five-storeyed inner Gōpuras Nos. 5, 6 and 8 have a few stone sculptures, but they are not of high standard. In them the dvārapālakas, Vināyaka, Rishabhārūḍa, Subrahmaṇya, Bhikshāṭana, Liṅgodbhava, Kaṅkāḷamūrti, Naṭarāja and Kālasamhāra are

repeatedly shown. Gopura No. 8 has a Veṇugōpala, which is full of expression and a Vināyaki (?), with the legs of a Yali, feminine human torso and the head of an elephant, holding a flower in its right hand. Narayana Stapati, a local stapati calls this Singa Nari Kunjaram<sup>88</sup>, but hastens to add that this name has neither any textual authority, nor is in vogue.

### **Stucco figures :**

The superstructures of the Gopuras of this temple are famous among artisans and public for the variety and beauty of their stucco figures, some of which are mutilated in spite of periodic renovations. Decorating the superstructure of Gōpuras with mutilate of stuccos is a typical Nayak contribution to the Dravidian architecture.

Some of the forms and themes like Somaskanda, Ālingana-mūrti, Gajasamhāra, Mīnakshi Kalyāṇa, Tripurāntaka, Vīrabhadra, Kāḷi and dvārapālas are often repeated in different Gōpuras as well as the same Gōpura. These stucco forms are mostly based on the stone sculptures in the Kambattaḍi mandapa in this temple, built by Krishna Virappa Nayak (1564-72) and the Pudu mandapam built by Tirumalai Nayak (1623-59).

In these stuccos the sculptors show a predilection for multi-armed figures, some of them having as many as 18 arms holding in them different weapons and symbols. Such Vīrabhadrās and Kāḷīs are innumerable in these Gōpuras.

Next in order of frequency is the Sarabha form of Siva, either standing near or violently attacking Narasimha.

The Eastern outer Gopura (No. 1) is remarkable for its stuccos of Vinayaka and Subrahmanya, who are depicted in their different aspects in the eastern face of all its tiers. There is no Gopura without these two, but none with so many as in this Gopura.

Next in order is Dakṣiṇāmūrti who in his Yōga, Vyākaraṇa and Vīṇādhara aspects is seen on the southern faces of Gopuras Nos. 1, 2, 3, 5 and 10.

Amidst such repetitions of figures bordering on monotony, we find certain rare figures offering a refreshing contrast. Among them the following are the most important.



### Mahāsadaśīva Mūrti<sup>39</sup>

This figure with his 25 faces arranged one above the other, in order of 9, 7, 5, 3, and 1 is a rare sculptural feat. Two such figures are found on each in the gopuras No.2 and No. 10. Only the heads in the corner of each line aswell as the one at the apex are seen with crowns on. His fifty hands, holding different objects and spread round his body, makes the observer bewildered

It is said that Siva with his five benign qualities is depicted as Sadasiva with five heads (each head representing a quality).<sup>40</sup> Each of the five qualities when further magnified into five facets makes him Mahasadasiva with 25 heads and it is a very rare representation in temples.<sup>41</sup>

### Visvarupa Subrahmaṇya? or Mahārudra?

This is another rare representation in Hindu iconography. Here the Lord (Subrahmaṇya or Śiva?) is shown with eleven heads in one row and twenty two arms, each holding a different weapon or symbol. These arms are so arranged as to form a circle around him and to balance the Mahāsadaśīva. By his feet a large peacock is shown. Two such figures are found, one each in the Gopuras No 2. and No 10, and in either case this figure is in the same tier counterbalancing the Mahāsadaśīva Mūrti.<sup>42</sup>

The identification of this figure poses a challenge. Due to the presence of the peacock, he is identified by the local stapatis as Viśvarūpa Subrahmaṇya. If so, it must have a multiple of 6 heads : 12 or 24. Here it has only 11, which is associated with Rudra. If this suggestion is acceptable, he may be called Maharudra tentatively and further research based on textual clarification is advisable.

### Churning of the Ocean

Two rare and beautiful panels depicting the mythical 'Churning of the ocean for getting nectar by the Dēvas and Asuras' are found in the inner face (i.e. facing North) of the

Southern outer Gopura (No. 2); and on the inner face (i.e. facing east) of the Western outer Gopura (No. 3). The mountain Māru at the centre with the snake Vāsuki encircling it, the sea underneath in waves, the Devas on the tail side and Asuras on the head side of Vāsuki are all set very well to cover the entire tier on one side.

#### Nārasimhi

This rare stucco shows Nārasimhi with five lion heads and seated on a lion vehicle. She holds different weapons in her ten arms. This is found on I tier of the northern face of Gopura No. 5.

#### Vināyaka in a snake-cradle :

Though repeatedly found in the Gōpuras, this theme seems to be interesting and enigmatic, in which Siva and Parvati standing abreast hold a five-hooded serpent topsy-turvy by its tail. The hood, bent like a laddle serves as an asana or cradle in which Vināyaka is seated. The legend behind it is not known. It is worth researching whether the serpent is indicative of the Kuṇḍalinī Sakti<sup>43</sup>.

#### Depiction of Tiruvilaiyādal<sup>144</sup> legends :

Among the 64 Tiruvilaiyāḍals, 20 are represented in stucco on these Gōpuras—may rarely and a few repeatedly. Their locations on the Gōpuras are shown in the following table :

| Gopura No. | Legend No. | Title of the Legend        | Exact Location            |
|------------|------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
|            | 1          | Indiran Paḷitirttatu       | E: III: R                 |
|            | 2          | Veḷḷaiyānai Sāpam Tirttatu | W: II: L                  |
|            | 4          | Maṇam eitatu               | E: II L & R, W: I & II: R |
|            | 9          | Malaiyattuvanai Aḷaittatu  | W: I: L & R               |
|            | 26         | Yānai eitatu               | W: III: IV: L             |

|                               |    |  |                               |
|-------------------------------|----|--|-------------------------------|
| G. No. 1 East<br>Outer Gopura | 43 | Tannirpandal<br>Vaittatu               | S: I: L                       |
|                               | 41 | Māmanākavandu<br>Vaḷakkuraittatu       | W: I: L                       |
|                               | 46 | Cholanaikkoṇṭaḷiyir<br>Taḷḷiyatu       | W: I: L                       |
|                               | 57 | Isaivātu ventratu                      | N: I: RY                      |
|                               | 59 | Panṭikkuṭṭikaḷukku<br>Aruḷpanninatu    | E: I: L<br>W: I: R<br>S: I: L |
|                               | 61 | Māmēruvil Vil Kayal<br>Seṇḍu Porittatu | S: II: L<br>W: II: R          |
| <hr/>                         |    |  |                               |
| G. No. 2                      | 4  |  | S: I: R & N: I: L             |
| South Outer                   | 26 |  | W: I: R                       |
| Gopura                        | 32 | Māriāḍinatu<br>(Kālmāriāḍiyatu)        | S: I: R                       |
| <hr/>                         |    |  |                               |
| G. No. 5                      | 4  |  | E: I: R                       |
| Gopura                        | 60 | Karikkuruvikku<br>Upadēsam             | S: I: R                       |
| Nayaka Gopura                 | 63 | Nāraikku Mukti<br>Aḷittatu             | W: IV: L                      |
| <hr/>                         |    |  |                               |
| G. No. 7                      | 4  |  | IV Tier (all sides)           |
| Palaka Gopura                 | 26 |  | E: II: R                      |
| Gōpura                        | 36 |  |                               |
|                               | 57 |  | E: I: L                       |
| <hr/>                         |    |  |                               |
| G. No. 8                      | 58 | Panṭikkuṭṭikaḷukku<br>Mulai Koḍuttatu  | W: II: L                      |
| Chinnamoṭṭai<br>Gōpura        |    |  |                               |
| <hr/>                         |    |  |                               |
| G. No. 10                     |    |  |                               |
| Chitragōpuram                 | 4  |  | E & W: I: L & R               |

|           |                                     |               |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| G. No. 12 | 2                                   | N : I ; R     |
| Kāḍaka    |                                     |               |
| Gopura    | 4                                   | E : II : R    |
|           | 9                                   | W : I : L & R |
| 30        | Maṇ Sumantatu                       | S : II (Full) |
| 14        | Kalyānaikku Karumbu<br>Vaḷankinatu  | E : II : L    |
| 54        | Sadāri Pāḍinatu<br>(Viragu Viṭṭatu) | N : II : R    |
| 58        |                                     | S : I : R     |
| 64        | Vedamuṇarttiyatu                    | N : II : L    |

Note : Legend Numbers refer to Nambi Tiruviḷaiyāḍal Purānam.  
E, S, W and N denote the face of the gopuras.

I, II... denote the tiers from down upwards. L and R  
for the left are right half of the tier.

### Conclusion :

The massive Gopuras of South India are not mere 'titanic masses' but reflect the majesty of human endeavour and creative talent. Like a beacon light they are meant to proclaim the glory of the deity in the sanctum. Generally the kings built such huge structures as a votive offering after a notable victory against a powerful rival king.

Though many Gopuras came into being before and during the Vijayanagar period, it was the Madurai Nayaks who seem to have filled the space of the superstructure with innumerable stucco figures.

In the Gopuras of Madurai Minakshi temple the representation of the Samharamurtis in ferocious moods, with many faces and fierce eyes, as well as many arms holding different weapons pre-dominate. Thus if these icons stress the "power" of the deity, the size of the gopura stresses the "power" of the builder.

## NOTES AND REFERENCE

1. The earlier studies on this temple complex have been limited in their scope. The range of D. Devakunjari's pioneer work *Madurai through the Ages* (Madras, 1970) being very wide, her treatment of the Gopuras leaves much scope for further study. Same is the case with A. V. Jayachandran's "Madurai Temple Complex" (a successful Ph.D. thesis submitted to M. K. University in 1978, now under publication), the main focus of which is the evolution of this temple complex as seen from legendary works and chronicles.
2. Yet another shrine dedicated to Sevvandisvara, situated to the south of Minakshi shrine is a later addition.  
Jointly Presented by ; 1) Dr. R. Venkataraman, School of Historical Studies, M. K. university, Madurai.  
2) Prof. S. Ramakrishnan, G.T.N. Arts College, Dindigul
3. No direct reference is found to this temple in the Sangam works. It is doubtful whether the *Kulavay* of *Paripādal* (v. II. 62) a later Sangam work, and the *Siva* temple in "Maduraik-kandam" of *Silappadikāram*, a post-Sangam work, and the *Alavay Sokkan* of *Gnana Sambandar* mean this temple. There is no epigraphical record of the First Pandyan Empire (7th-10th century A.D.) or of the early Cholas, which is significant. The earliest inscription belongs to *Jatavarman Kulasekhara I* (1190-1223). The literary works like *Tiruppani Vivaram* and *Tiruppani Malai* refer to the evolution of this temple only from the period of the said *Kulasekhara*. *St. Sundarar* (9th cent.) who sang in praise of the Lord *Siva* at *Tirupparamkunram*, is silent about *Minakshi* temple. It is probable that there was an *Alavay Sokkan* temple in 7th century which went out of existence in the time of *Sundarar*. The *Siva* of *Minakshi* temple of 12th century might have appropriated the earlier name, *Alavay Sokkan*.
4. Though the concept of *Pati* and *Pasu* is philosophically dealt in by *Saiva Siddhanta*, the concept as such (i.e., God as a shepherd and the souls as a herd of cattle) is universal since the pastoral stage. In *Vaishnavism*, *Vishnu* is *Gopala* the protector of cows.

5. They prescribe that the Gopuras of the king's palace should be only three-fourth that of the temple : Kāśyapa Śilpa Śāstram, ed. K. V. Subrahmanya Sashtri Tanjore, 1962.
6. Percy Brown, Indian Architecture (Hindu Period), Bombay, 1976, p. 88. This view is also plausible in the light of the iconoclastic Muslim invasion of the south in the 14th century.
7. Stella Kramrisch, The Hindu Temple, Calcutta, 1946, p. 04
8. Vishnudharmottara cited by K.V, Soundarajan, "The Matrix of South Indian Architecture", Journal of Indian History, Vol. XLIII, part iii, no., 129. Dec 1965, p. 797.
9. One that can be entered into from all four sides.
10. Stella Kramrisch, Hindu Temple, Calcutta, 1946, p. 204; A.V. Jayachandran, "The Madurai Temple Gopurams", The Madurai Temple Complex, Madurai 1974, p. 368, Agamas which too indulge in similar speculations do not seem to have gone this far.
11. Mānasāra gives 12 gradations and names them according to the size and storeys.
12. Thus from the 1st to the 12th they are respectively Sourākanta, Chandrakantra, Chāndita, Bhūshana, Vivṛta, Supradia. Visva, Bhu, Bhuvana, Īsa, Magadha and Ārya. Mānasāra.
13. These numbers are based on the plan appended to here.
14. Tiruppani Vivaram : No. 3; and Tiruppanimalai. v. 7 refer to one Sundara Pandya as its builder in Saka 1140. Of the two inscriptions in this Gopura one refers to "Tribhuvana Chakravarti Konirmai kondan (T. C. K)" M. V. Sundara Pandya and another to T. C. K. Avanivendarman. The former is M.V. Sundarapandya I and the latter is J.V. Sundarapandya I.
15. "The Madurai Temple Gopurams", op. cit. p. 368.
16. Tiruppani Vivaram : No. 6, and Tiruppanimalai : v. 12.

17. Tiruppanimālai : v. 27 ; and Tiruppanivivaram : 12.
18. D. Devakunjari, Madurai Through the Ages, Madras, 1979, p. 223.
19. Tiruppanimālai ; v. 53 ; and Tiruppanivivaram : 26
20. V. Ramanathan Chettiyar, "Madurai Koyilil Vijayanagara Tiruppani", Kumbhabisheka Souvenir, Ed. P. T. Rajan, Madurai, 1963, pp. 87-90. This is corrected by local chronicles as inscription on the west side wall on the entry way to this gopura.
21. As per an inscription of this king on the northern wall of the second prakara in the Amman shrine. A.R.E. No:187 of 1944. It records that the king donated the village Cholapandyanallur at the instance of Annan Tamil Pallavaraiyar for a number of construction works.
22. Tiruppanimālai ; v. 57 ; and Tiruppanivivaram : 24.
23. Tiruppanimālai : v. 51
24. As per an Inscription on this gopura. A. R. E. No. 187 of 1942. Tiruppanivivaram : 7 and Tiruppanimālai : v. 14 record the date as Saka 1294 ( A. D. 1372 ) which is untenable in the light of the late style of this gopura.
25. Tiruppanimālai : v 23 and Tiruppanivivaram : 10.
26. Tiruppanivivaram ; 7.
27. Tiruppanimālai : v. 34; and Tiruppanivivaram : 11.
28. According to the Tiruviḷaiyādal purānam ( Nambī ), Legend No. 24, Siva is said to have allowed a chola king to enter at night through this gate to worship him.
29. Vide the inscription of this king in the inner wall of this gopura: A.R.E. No. 192 of 1944.
30. Tiruppanivivaram : 25. This Tummacci was one of the 72 Poligars an institution created by Visvanatha Nayak (1529-64). He revolted and against Krishnappa Nayak (1564-72), the Nayak ruler of Madurai and lost his life in the battle.

31. Tiruppanivivaram : 2
32. A.V. Jeyachandran, "The Madurai temple gopurams" in The Madurai Temple Complex, Madurai, 1974" p. 368.
33. Tiruppanivivaram : 4
34. Tiruppanimālai: v.13
35. B.N. Sharma, Iconography of Sadasiva, New Delhi, 1976. Foreword by Guiseppe Tucci.
36. Idem.
37. They are of Bhikshatana, Nataraja Dancing Vishnu, and a saint on the outer facade; and those of Ardhanaai, Subrnmanya with consorts and a saint in the inner facade.
38. It is a compound word meahing; Singa — Lion; Nari—woman; and Kunjara—elephant. An ingeneous coinage indeed.
39. He is also called Mahakailasamurti. vide: Sri Tatvanidhi Vol. I, Tanjore, 1963, pp. 230-233.  
  
Such a stucco of Mahāsadaśiva is found on the Gopura of Vaidisvaran Kovil (Tanjore district) and it belongs to 18th century A. D.
- 40 They are Sadyojata, Vamadeva, Aghora, Tatpurusha and Isnna.
41. B. N. Sharma, Iconography of Sadasiva, Delhi, 1976, pp. 1-34, and T. A. Gopinatha Rao, Elements of Hindu Iconography, Part-II, pp. 373-74.
42. In Gopura No. 2 (southern outer Gopura) both are in the outer face of III tier, i.e. facing south. While Mahasadasiva is on the left of the centre, this figure is on the right.  
  
In Gopura No. 10 (seven-storyed Citra Gopura) they are in the inner face of III tier, i.e. facing West. Here Mahasadasiva is on the right of centre and Subrahmanya (?) is on the left.
43. The first seat of Kuṇḍalini is said to be Mūlādhāra presided over by Vinākaka.
44. Divine sports supposed to have been performed by Lord Chokkanātha, the presiding deity of this temple.



# **Bharatanatya Images in the Temples of Tamil Nadu**

**K. Sadasivan**

## **Introduction :**

Cilappadikāram<sup>1</sup> and Maṇimēkhalai<sup>2</sup>, the Tamil Epics, inform us that the ancient Tamils were aware of the concept of sixty-four arts. They gave to their arts a divine origin and religious orientation. They conceived them as a means to achieve total concord with the Universal Being. The art of image-making is one of the ways to realize the Ultimate Reality. Using their 'intuitive vision', the sculptors of ancient Tamilnadu created scores of dancing figures in their temples. By intense study of the related literature, 'long intellectual training', 'creative vision' and 'meditation coupled with mythology', they qualified themselves to depict this kind of visual education. As dedicated to the Divine and depicted on the walls of temples, the images become 'spiritually and intellectually significant.

Art historians hold that the history of image-making in Tamilnadu begins with the Pallavas. However, the ancient Tamils were not unaware of this spatial art. A recently discovered bust (Pl. XVI. Fig. 4) from the Lower Kaveri Valley, probably of the first three centuries A.D. may suggest the earliest instance of a dancing girl's image in Tamilnadu.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, we do not have many such examples either in the form of remains or monuments. The Pallavas held to be the true heirs of the Satavahanas in the political and cultural sense, inherited the indigenous tradition of Tamilnadu and assimilated the foreign Gupta and other South Indian models and thus 'enriched the tradition.'<sup>4</sup> of the arts. Thus we enter into the threshold of scores of dance images in the temples of Tamilnadu.

## **Bharata Nāṭyaśāstra :**

Before making a study of the various forms of dance images in medieval Tamilnadu, it is thought useful to make

an analysis of the hold of Bharatanāṭya on art lovers. Bharata Nāṭyaśāstra, supposed to have been written by Bharata,<sup>5</sup> a Kashmiri,<sup>6</sup> around second or third or fourth century A.D.,<sup>7</sup> is the fifth Vēda, created by Brahma at the request of Indra. Nāṭyaśāstra, not a taboo to the Sudras, was created to provide pleasure and delight to all irrespective of castes.<sup>8</sup> Nāṭyaśāstra appears to have been a compilation of the then existing forms of dance and described in earlier works by some authors of the same pen name.<sup>9</sup>

Though many classical dance forms are recorded in the medieval Tamil inscriptions,<sup>10</sup> it is perhaps unfortunate that the nomenclature of BHARATA NĀṬYAŚĀSTRĀ nowhere occurs in them. But the dance techniques enumerated in Bharata Nāṭyaśāstras seems to have been in vogue in the temples of Tamilnadu. However, some inferential, literary, epigraphical and sculptural evidences prove the hold of this Śāstra on art lovers in medieval Tamilnadu. The nomenclatures Nāṭya Nannū<sup>11</sup> and Barataśēnāpatiyam,<sup>12</sup> Tamil works on dramaturgy are perhaps reminiscent of Bharata Nāṭyaśāstra. The view that Raṅgapatāka, an expert in Bharatanāṭya<sup>13</sup> and one of the queens of Rājasimha, lends support to this. The Kuḍumiyānmalai inscriptions<sup>14</sup> refer to the different modes of dance expressed in the Nāṭyaśāstra. They also speak of certain grāmas and jatis found mentioned in that work. Similarly, in an inscription from Paṭṭaḍakkal,<sup>15</sup> there is a reference to two verses in Sanskrit in the Ārya metre signed at the end by certain Achalada. They refer to the growing popularity of a new work on the dance, following the precepts of Bharata. The new work is said to have secured a decisive victory over the school of Bharata against the votaries of the rival school or schools. The record refers to this as Puṇanaṭa and Kuṭilōnnaṭanata, i.e., 'the hostile actor and the actor who is crookedly eminent.<sup>15a</sup> The record, according to S. Gurusurti, reveals that there were different schools on Nāṭyaśāstra in the Deccan, besides the time-honoured one of Bharata school.<sup>16</sup> Besides, a variety of dance poses depicted in the Kailasanātha and Vaikunṭha perumāḷ temples<sup>17</sup> at Kāñchi, reveals the popularity of classical dancing in Tamilnadu. The Śittannavāsai Cave Paintings<sup>18</sup> and the Tanjāvūr Big Temple Paintings<sup>19</sup> of beautiful dance postures further attest to the popularity of Nāṭyaśāstra in medieval Tamilnadu.

An inscription<sup>20a</sup> from Āttūr of the days of Kōpperuñjiṅgan, the Kāḍavarāya King of Śēndamaṅgalam, addressess the King as 'unequal in Bharatam' (Bharata mallan). In the Tiruvaṇṇāmalai inscriptions<sup>20b</sup> he is praised as Bharatam Vallāṇ (an expert in Bharatam). An epigraph from Chidambaram<sup>20c</sup> and another from Tiruvaṇṇāmalai<sup>20d</sup> call him Cokkac-Ciyan (an expert in Cokkam dance). From these birudas of Kōpperuñjiṅga we learn that Bharatam, the dance from referred to in the Nāṭyaśāstra, was in vogue in Tamil nadu around the 13th century A.D. Karaṇa poses depicted in the Big Temple of Tañjāvūr, the Sāraṅgapāṇi Temple at Kumbakōṇam and the Naṭarāja Temple at Chidambaram attest to the popularity of Bharatanāṭyam in Tamil nadu in those days. Direct reference to Bharatam (Bharatanāṭya) occurs only in the Vijayanagar-Nayak age, around the fifteenth-sixteenth century A. D.<sup>21</sup>

### **Classifications :**

One could trace many varieties and stages in the evolution of Bharatanāṭya images in the temples of medieval Tamilnadu. Having in mind the distinctive stylization, Kapila Vatsyayan had divided the sculptural representations into four categories. They are : (i) the traditional stylized motifs; (ii) the unclassified and scattered scenes of dance and music; (iii) the sculptural illustration of certain verses of the Nāṭyaśāstra in the temples of the South; (iv) the sculptural representation of Gods and Goddesses known as nrttamūrtis, which represent the dancing aspects of these Gods and Goddesses.<sup>22</sup>

The first category of dance images appears to be very meagre in Tamilnadu. Many examples of the second category exist in the temples of medieval Tamilnadu. They are depicted at random, following no order of sequence. But as Kapila Vatsyayan thinks, these dancing figures can be fruitfully analysed in terms of the dance terminology of Bharata. Among these are often examples of highly stylized and formal dancing.<sup>23</sup> A number of scholars have attempted to identify a few of them from the temples of Dārāsūram, Tiruvārūr, etc. But many are yet to be identified as such. The classification of

Kapila Vatsyayan is applied in the following description of images with minor modification of the order.

### Unclassified Scenes :

Recently some sculptural representations of dancers were traced out from the Tāntōṇṇisvarar temple of Kāñchi. According to R. Nagaswami these images represent the akak kūttu, i.e., dance performed by couples.<sup>24</sup> The Kailāsanātha Temple constructed by Rājasimha has the sculptured figures of some dancing women.<sup>25</sup> in Vaikunṭhaperumāḷ Temple, Kāñchi, there are some sculptures representing group dances, by men and women.<sup>26</sup> Some decorative carvings of the dances are evident in the low Kabōdam of the temple of Naṭtāmaḷai. The row of miniature shrines on the Kabōdam of the temple indicates details from the Kūttuvari. The dancing figures are in a 'seductive posture.'<sup>27</sup> A tower on the twin temples of Koḍumbāḷūr has the carved-out figure of a woman, holding a fan. Near to her are the iconic sculptures of the manifestations of Siva.<sup>28</sup> The scene may suggest the service of a Dēvaraḍiyāḷ to the Lord Siva. In Sittannavasal, there are the famous painted figures (busts) of two dancing girls. The dancer on the right side of the pillar has her left arm in the 'Gajahasta' pose while her right palm is held in Catura pose.<sup>29</sup> The dancer on the other pillar has her left palm stretched out with grace as in the mode of dance described as Latāvṛśchika in the Nāṭyasāstra.<sup>30</sup> But R. Nagaswamy and M. Chandramurti think that she is in the Recita pose and her arm depicted in the Abhayamudra.<sup>31</sup>

An image of a dancing girl has been found out in a shrine in the outside wall of the art gallery in the Big Temple, Tanjāvūr. Naṭana. Kāsināthan thinks that the image represents at the 400 Taḷi-ccērippeṇḍugaḷ of the Big Temple.<sup>32</sup> Vidvan C. Govindarajanar of Karanthai discovered some beautiful sculptures of dancing scenes from the fortifications of Tanjāvūr. They are the sculptures of dancing Kaṇṇaṇ (Naṭanak-Kaṇṇaṇ), of two women performing Kōḷāṭṭam (a kind of dance with sticks), of two other women engaged in the same Kōḷāṭṭam, of a women performing Nrīttam and six other women in a line performing dance in various ways.<sup>33</sup> The stone slabs containing these images, according to him, were taken from the destroyed Viṣṇu temple complex, popularly called Māmaṇikkōil and the Tanjāvūr Yālinagar Viṇṇagar. Rājārāja-I is

said to have transferred some *Taḷiccerippeṇḍgaḷ* from this temple to the Big Temple.<sup>34</sup> Govindarajanar says that these images represent the dance then in vogue in Tamilnadu prior to the twelfth century A.D.,<sup>35</sup> The main threshold of the Kampakarēśvarar temple at Tribhuvanam contains detailed sculptures of dancing sequences. Suresh B. Pillai thinks that they are "aesthetically beautiful dancing sequences when counter-checked with the dances of the goblins in the *bhudavarisai*."<sup>36</sup>

A stone lattice on the right flank of the unfinished first entrance (*Gōpuram*) of the Airāvathēśvarar Temple at Dārāsuram near Kumbakōṇam has dance images. The panels depict the trio : the drummers, dancers and the chimers within intertwining creepers. 'Carved out dexterously,'<sup>37</sup> the panels may suggest the *Naṭṭuvanārs*, the *Dēvaraḷiyārs* and the cymbalists, performing a ritual dance from the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The *Naṭṭuvanārs* and the chimers give and keep the *rāga* and *tāla*, while the dancers express the *bhāva*.

The lower most tier (in the plinth) in the tiered circumbulatory corridor in the same temple contains the register of sculptures. This could be called *palakai*; but not being plain. This would in reality, in sculptur's language, bear the name of *Ciṭṭpavari*. The ambulatory passages have the sculptured panels of dancing. Suresh B. Pillai compares them with the corresponding sculptures in the plinth of the ambulatory passages of Kampakarēśvarar temple at Tribhuvanam. He also says that the Dārāsuram temple possesses certain features which could be positively attributed to the Buddhists.<sup>38</sup> It is to be noted that no Buddhist *Vihāra* in Tamilnadu has the *Bharatanāṭya* images depicted as in the Siva temple. However, these images are yet to be identified in relation to *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

Two sculptured panels of dance are found at Trivikramangalam temple,<sup>39</sup> near Trivandrum. The central compartment contains three figurines of a dancing woman and two mothers with their babies, while the side-panels represent two varieties of gyrations of a danseuse, with attendants marking time with the *mṛidaṅgam* and a pair of cymbals. These are the musical instruments commonly used in temple dances by *Dēvaraḷiyars*. Of these dancing

figures, the one that on the right recess seems to illustrate the type of dance called Ardhamattali listed in Bharata Nāṭyasāstra.<sup>40</sup> A representation of this kind of dance is found sculptured as No. 31 of the panels illustrating the Madras Epigraphical Report for 1914, Plate II.<sup>41</sup> The other variety is not definitely identifiable. Ramanatha Ayyar writes: "But both the pieces of sculptures are interesting and show a high degree of technique, from the conquettish smile playing round the lips of the danseuse down to the appreciative snirk of the attendants."<sup>42</sup> Many temples of Kerala, Kaṇḍiṃyūr and Tirukkulaśēkharapuram too have many Bharatanāṭya images.

Besides the single, double and even triple dancers carved out in the basements of the Siva temples at Tribhuvanam and Dārāsuram, the Amman walls of the Naṭarāja temple of Chidambaram have many dance figures of women. Kapila Vatsyayan thinks that they have not been sculptured as Karaṇas specifically, but they are accurate depictions of significant moments in the movements of many Karaṇas. She holds that figures 107 to 120 (Plates in her book) represent a cross section; their variety and their insistence on a distinct style is obvious<sup>43</sup>. These may belong to the later Chōla - Kāḍavarāya age. Best instances of the dance panels of the Vijayanagar age in this temple are depicted in the plinth of the Kārtikēya shrine and the bases of the inner side of the outer Prākāra and the Thousand Pillared Hall.

The Thyāgarāja temple, Tiruvārūr contains a few specimens of dance figures, probably of the later Chōla age. On the basement of the Eastern Gōpuram of the third Prākāra, some pilasters are found with danceuses placed on their capitals. "These figures", according to S. Ponnusamy, "are remarkable for their grace and suppleness of form"<sup>44</sup>. They are detachable round images. One of them stands in the Valitam<sup>45</sup> pose, but the mudras of the hands are lost as both hands are broken. The frieze of the grotesque Bhūtagaṇas running round the entire base of the structure affords a striking background in contrast with the graceful figure of the danceuses.

A more intricate Karaṇa called the Laḷāṭa tilaka<sup>46</sup> is depicted in another sculpture of a danseuse similar to the one above.

Another figure of a danseuse is represented in the Karaṇa called Ghūrṇitam<sup>47</sup>. But Ponnusamy thinks that in all respects this figure resembles the one found in the Valitam pose<sup>48</sup>.

The entry way pilasters of the Western Gōpuram of the third Prākāra, are relieved with panels of sculptures. Sculptural puns are found in some of these small panels. One of them combines three figures; the central one that of a dancer, the right one that of a mṛdaṅga player and the one found on the left probably of another musician<sup>49</sup> (cymbalist). All these are on four legs, the two central legs forming the pair belonging to the female dancer in Catura pose<sup>50</sup>.

The other two figures appear to turn away from the centre as the two legs of the dancer determine the postures of the other two figures also. This certainly suggests a moment in the movement of the pose, in which the musicians are actively engaged. This scene is set in a small one square foot panel approximately.

Another interesting sculptural pun (probably another moment in the movement) is a female figure with two pairs of legs, a single head and torso, and a single pair of arms. The figure faces front and the two pairs of legs are turned side ways, one leg in each pair resting on one knee, the other being lifted up. An elaborate halo is found behind the head. Below this figure, another panel is found to depict a dance, striking a pose of Bharatanāṭya<sup>51</sup>.

Another panel contains a sculptural pun (probably a moment of a karaṇa pose), in which a complex dancing figure with two forms, one male and the other female on a single pair of legs, execute an intricate movement. The pose of the female is particularly interesting as the whole body appears to curve towards the proper left like an arch<sup>52</sup>. Above this figure is the panel of Siva in the Samhāra aspects, shown invariably in tāṇḍava poses. In this instance the divine dancer takes his place along with other dancing sculptures on the pilaster of the entry way of the Western Gōpuram. The complex and relative figures found both in Dārāsuram and Tiruvārūr depict different dancing postures probably as combinations of different movements executed during a dance performance<sup>53</sup>.

Wood carvings on temple cars and on jambs and lintels of doors are replete with dancing poses, reproducing the appropriate Karaṇas, nṛtta hastas, cāris and śthānas.<sup>54</sup> An example is found in the Siva Temple of Pericciyūr in Tiruppattūr in Ramnad. Wood carvings are found in the gates of the mukhamāṇḍapa and mahā-māṇḍapa. The figures of the artist beating the drum and the dancing girl on one side; on another side, two artistes beating the drum, the artist playing on the nādaśvaram, the Naṭṭuvan, and the dancing girl are carved.<sup>55</sup>

### **Divine Dance Images :**

Of Kapila Vatsyayan's four classifications of dance images, the last one deals with a class of images of the Gods and Goddesses. Known as nṛttamūrtis, they represent the dancing aspects of these gods and goddesses as described in the sculptural and the iconographical texts.<sup>56</sup> Technical works such as the Āgamas, Silpaśāstras and the Nāṭyaśāstra describe the features of the dancing deities. A knowledge of them are enjoined on a successful sculptor. He must determine the characteristics of the images and find out the 'relation that subsists between the adorer and the adored.'<sup>57</sup> He must have sound knowledge in the Dhyāna Slōkas of the Āgama Sāstras which state in clear terms the characteristics of each deity. The sculptor had to meditate with such a Slōka in mind, conceive and visualize the form in stone.

Among the heavenly beings, the concept of dance has been attributed to the Apsaras, Gandharvas, Kinnāras and even the Bhūtaganas. Many deities of the Hindu Pantheon were conceived as dancing deities. Some such deities are Gaṇēsa, Muruga, Kṛishṇa, Manmatha, Pārvati, Duṛga, Kālī, Lakshmi and Saraswathī. Apart from them, Lord Siva is conceived as the Lord of Dance, Naṭarāja. The Ghōra, Pāśupata aspects of Siva are all dancing forms.<sup>58</sup>

There is some misconception about the origin of the Naṭarāja cult and the date of the creation of the sculpture of Naṭarāja in the Ānanda tāṇḍava form. According to Padma Subrahmanyam, it got crystallised much later.<sup>59</sup> One scholar states : "It was



probably during the time of Parāntaka I that the very first sample in stone of the Ānanda tāṇḍava form of Naṭarāja was created."<sup>60</sup> S. R. Balasubrahmanyam thinks that it was one of the immediate effects of the widespread Hindu revival in the sixth century A. D. He cites the sculptures of dancing Śiva at Badami, Aihole, Udayagiri (near Nellore), Elephanta and Ellora as examples to prove his point.<sup>61</sup>

The Śrī Tatva Nidhi quotes the Kāraṇāgama and describes seven kinds of dance. The first concerns the Ānanda tāṇḍava form. In addition, other Tāṇḍava forms viz., Sandiva, Umā, Gauri, Kāḷika, Tripurā and Samhana are described.<sup>62</sup> The Kasyapa Silpa mentions 18 kinds of dances and deals specifically with 9 of them. The Silpa Ratna describes out of 108 forms only nine kinds of this icon more or less on the same lines.<sup>62(a)</sup> The Bharata Nāṭya-śāstra describes 108 Karaṇas and forms of Tāṇḍava poses.<sup>63</sup> Above all, the Tamil epic, Cilappadikāram, mentions a number of dances associated with Śiva, Viṣṇu, Duṛga, Muruga and Kṛiṣṇa.

St. Tirumūlar of legendary fame (probably of 6th century A.D.) describes the Ānanda-Tillai-Kūttu.<sup>64</sup> St. Appar and St. Sambandar (7th century A.D.) have glorified the ecstatic dance of Tillai Naṭarāja. Nāḍānta Naṭanam and Bhujāṅgaatrāsa appear to be other names of Ānanda tāṇḍava. St. Sambandar calls Lord Naṭarāja of Tirumudukkunṇam as Puyaṇṇan.<sup>65</sup> In Māmalla-puram, Mahishāsuramardani panel depicts the dance pose of Dēvi. The Bhujāṅgaatrāsa form of Naṭarāja is found on a pillar of a cave-temple at Siyāmaṅgalam. The left hand of Naṭarāja is in lōla hasta instead of gaja hasta. There is a dancing Śiva image in the second Taḷa of the Dharmarāja Ratha at Māmallapuram. Śiva tāṇḍava sculptures are found in panels in the temples at Tirukkaṇḍiyūr and Srinivāsanallūr. The temple of Viśhāmaṅgalēśvaram in Turai-yūr (Tuḍaiyur) of the days of Āditya I has on a pillar a sculpture of the Ānanda tāṇḍava from Naṭarāja.<sup>66</sup>

The Kuram Naṭarāja is considered the earliest Pallava bronze on the Naṭarāja theme. It is in Ūrdhva-Jhānu pose (not Ūrdhva tāṇḍava pose as mentioned by Barrett).<sup>67</sup> Nallur Naṭarāja is placed next to the Kuram Naṭarāja. It is in Čatura pose and is eight armed, a unique feature in the Tamil land.<sup>68</sup> Therefore,

S. R. Balasubrahmanyam thinks that the concept of Siva-Naṭarāja got crystallized in the form of stone images centuries earlier to Parāntaka I.<sup>69</sup>

#### Karṇas in Sculpture :

As seen already, dance has influenced sculptures deeply. The graceful form of dance seems to have offered much inspiration to the sculptors. Dance and sculptures depend more on the fundamental principle of filling up space on the basis of symmetry and proportion. Padma Subramanyam says that the terms like 'Sausṭava' and 'Aṅga Suddha', often used in connection with actual dancings, refer to execution of the movement of the various Aṅga or limbs of the body in symmetrically beautiful manner.<sup>70</sup> Hence both these arts are dependent on the law of proportion. According to Saṅgītaratnākara, the dancer of a beautiful dance is successful; success depends on nothing but beauty.<sup>71</sup> Sukranītisārā enjoins on a sculptor such prescriptions; those images, created in accordance with canonical prescription (Sāstramāna), can be truly lovely.<sup>72</sup> As referred to earlier, Tala-mana and Pramāṇa (proportions) are highly necessary for sculptures.<sup>73</sup> Strict adherence to these rules makes even the short-chubby Bhūtagaṇas sculptured in the most delectable manner appear very attractive and charming says Padma Subramanyam.<sup>74</sup> These dwarf attendants are given an important role in the origin of group dances called Piṇḍibandhas in the Nāṭyaśāstra. There are hundreds of such fascinating Gaṇas forming groups of dancers and musicians in some of the South Indian temples. The Gana panels of the Kailāsanatha temple at Kānchi and those of Veṭṭuvānkoil at Kaḷugumalai in Tirunelveli District are of 'irresistible attention compelling our admiration.'<sup>75</sup> Some of these Ganas are seen performing even Karaṇas like Daṇḍapādam.

Siva as the Lord of Dance has been represented in different sthānas like the Caturam, Lalitam, Lalāṭatilakam, Kaṭī-saman, Abidham, Bhujaṅga-trāsita, Kuncita, Ūrdhvajhānu and so forth.<sup>76</sup> Silparatna describes only nine forms out of 108 poses. Ānandatāṇḍava icon is the first one described there. It is a widely known figure of Naṭarāja. The first four of its list are practically the same from the point of view of Bharata's Karaṇas. They are the representation of the twenty-fourth Karaṇa, i.e., Bhujaṅga-trāsita. Rauravāgama,<sup>77</sup> Sakalādhikāra,<sup>78</sup> Ajītagama,<sup>79</sup>

and Kāraṇāgama<sup>80</sup> refer to Ānanda-tāṇḍava as Bhujaṅga-trāsita only. These Āgamas refer to his dance as Nr̥tta and not as Tāṇḍava as widely known. According to Abhinavagupta's Commentary, this Nr̥ttakaraṇa (Bhujaṅga-trāsita) depicts a frightened Lord on seeing a serpent, which is near his leg. Therefore, the Lord is depicted as his leg lifted up in the presence of one or many serpents near his feet. According to Kāmikāgama, Siva's right foot is placed on the Apasmāra, who is amidst many serpents. Both Silparatna and Sakalādhikāra mention that the Apasmāra must carry a serpent in his left hand and show the mudra (sign) of the same (Sarpasiras hasta) with his right hand. Sakalādhikāra mentions that at the beginning of the embryonic Universe Siva danced in the midst of the celestials under the banyan tree. Then bitten by the serpent Kārkōṭa, he performed the Bhujaṅga-trāsita Nr̥tta.<sup>81</sup>

T.A. Gopinatha Rao has tried to identify some of the Tāṇḍava forms-Caturam (in the form of Sandhyā-tāṇḍavam), Kaṭisaman, Lalitam, Talasampōsita. etc.<sup>82</sup> Padma Subrahmanyam identifies Daṇḍapādam or Lalitatilakam or Viṣṇukrāntam in Ūrdhva-tāṇḍava, Urdhvajhanu in Kalarimurti and Apakrantam in Gajasamhāramūrti. Urdhva-tāṇḍava is called Uddhaṇḍa and Atyuddhaṇḍa Nr̥ttas in Rauravāgama.<sup>83</sup> T.A. Gopinatha Rao has tried to identify a sculpture of Siva in a seated posture from Kailāsanātha temple at Kānchi. But he has confessed his inability to link it with any of the Karaṇa descriptions. But Padma Subrahmanyam identifies it either as Grdhrāvalīnakam or even Kuncitam.<sup>84</sup> This multi-armed figure is seen resting on the floor with the toes of one foot and the knee of the other with the respective shank and foot lifted. An almost replica of this figure is seen at Paṭṭaḍakal belonging to the Western Chālukyas, contemporary to the Kailāsanātha temple, Kānchi.

The Kailāsanātha temple is famous for a large number of sculptures of Siva's Yogic Evening dance, the Sandhyā-nr̥ttamūrti, with its gentle rhythms, harmoniously set at glorious eventide.<sup>85</sup> In the main shrine of the same temple is depicted the Ūrdhva-tāṇḍava pose of Sivā.<sup>86</sup> The figure of Naṭarāja shows that the divinity in whom both dancing and music

ars combined (Nr̥ttamūrti and Nādamūrti). A rock-cut cave sculpture in Tirupparaṅkundram, near Madurai, probably of 8th century A.D., depicts Siva, the Cosmic Dancer and Pārvati, as the Universal Spectator.<sup>87</sup> This dance pose may suggest the Catura form of Karaṇa.

Chidambaram evolved the Ānanda tāṇḍava form of the Naṭarāja cult and so it was its original home. It was the dance of bliss to bestow divine grace on Vyāgrapāda and Patañjali, a repetition of the original dance of Siva to humble the heretical rishis of the Dārukā forest<sup>88</sup>. On this was superimposed the Kālī cult according to which Siva humbled Kālī by enacting the Ūrdhva - tāṇḍava form of dance originally associated with Tiruvālaṅkādu<sup>89</sup>. An author identifies the original shrine to Kālī in the heart of the Tillai forest with the present Nr̥ttasabhā inside the Srī Naṭarāja Shrine<sup>90</sup>. The Nr̥ttasabhā is held to be the site of the dance contest. It holds an eight-armed image of Siva performing the Ūrdhva-tāṇḍava. Kālī is placed before the God on the right. The Nr̥ttasabhā, the scene of the Ūrdhvatāṇḍava, is to be distinguished from the Kanakasabhā, where Siva performs the Ānanda tāṇḍava in the presence of his wife. The Kanakasabhā leads to the Citsabhā, which is considered to be the site of the dance<sup>91</sup>. The concept of dancing Naṭarāja was probably put into practice in the form of an image around the 6th or 7th century A. D.

In the old shrine of Siva at Tirupparaṅkundram, we find Siva dancing in competition with Kālī in the Central shrine<sup>95</sup>. In the Madurai temple two dances of Siva are depicted. At Āyirakkāl Maṇḍapa, Kampattāṭi Maṇḍapa and Maṇḍapa Nāyaka Maṇḍapa the dances classified as Ānanda tāṇḍava<sup>99</sup> are depicted. In this dance Siva dancing with his left foot lifted is delineated. At Veḷḷiambalam in the Sanctum Complex of Sundarēśvarar is depicted Cokka tāṇḍavam<sup>94</sup>, in which the Lord dances with his right leg uplifted. This dance is also known as Sundara-tāṇḍavam<sup>95</sup>, a dance in free style ('a dance of gay abandon'). The legend here says that the Lord changed his foot at the request of a Pāṇḍyan<sup>76</sup>. The Naṭarāja image in the temple of Tiruvālaṅkādu is designed in a way to depict Siva perfor-

ming the Ūrdhva tāṇḍava. He is shown to have lifted his left leg above his head.

#### Karaṇa Images and Bharata Nāṭyaśāstra Verses :

Kapila Vatsyayan's third category deals with the sculptural illustration of certain verses of Nāṭyaśāstra in the temples of South India<sup>97</sup>. A reference to Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra helps unravel the significance of Karaṇas. Many attempts were made thus to identify all sculptural representations of dancing with the Karaṇas of Bharata.

C. Sivaramamurti defines Karaṇa as the rhythmic co-ordination of the patterned movements of hands and feet from a basic attitude.<sup>98</sup> Karaṇa, according to Padma Subrahmanyam, means 'to do' or action which is derived from the root Kr-doing. They are the basic units of dance as propounded by Bharata in his Nāṭyaśāstra.<sup>99</sup> Kapila Vatsyayan says that Karaṇas are sequences or cadences of movement and are not always static poses. She thinks that an attempt at sculptural representation can thus only be an approximation of the movement described.<sup>100</sup> But Sri Ramaswami Sastri has assumed that the definitions of Karaṇas in the Nāṭyaśāstra are descriptions of static poses.<sup>101</sup> If the sculptors depicted an entire sequence of movement through sculptural representation, it would be difficult to find out the initial, intermediary or final position of the movement. Kapila Vatsyayan has, therefore, tried to reclassify the Karaṇas in terms of the distinctive or principal movement into nine categories.<sup>102</sup> She has also listed the discrepancies and a few inaccuracies of previous identifications.<sup>103</sup>

Karana poses are depicted in the temples of Tanjāvūr, Kumbakonam, Chidambaram, Tiruvannāmalai and Vriddachalam. Among them, the Karaṇa poses of the Brahadiśvara temple at Tanjāvūr is the earliest. The Tanjāvūr Karaṇas were discovered by Sri K. R. Srinivasan and identified by Sri T. N. Ramachandran in the early fifties. In the corridor corresponding to the second storey of the āditāḷa (of the vertical wall portion) of the Srivimāna of the Big Temple, a set of panels of stone sculptures in high relief showing 81 Karaṇas out of 108 is depicted. Work of the 11th century A.D. of the Great Rājarāja I, 'this would really mark the first (known) plastic representation of these Karaṇas anywhere in India.'<sup>104</sup>

Unfortunately, this series of sculptures are 'incomplete both qualitatively.'<sup>105</sup> The sculptured 81 Karaṇas start from Karaṇa 1, viz., Talapushpapuṭam to Karaṇa 81, Sarpitam, in perfect consonance with the serial order mentioned in Nāṭyaśāstra. Against the remaining unrepresented Karaṇas, there are mere black block of stones. Many of the existing figures are yet to be given final touches. Yet they are the priceless gifts of the Emperor's sculptors to the world.

The Karaṇa figures in Tanjāvūr are about two feet in height and are found one after another in a serial order as prescribed by Bharata.<sup>106</sup> All the 81 Karaṇas represent male figures, probably carved after the model of Siva dance. Padma Subrahmanyam says that the view of Sri V. Raghavan that Karaṇas 61 and 72 are represented by female figures<sup>107</sup> is obviously erroneous.<sup>108</sup> Each sculpture of Tanjavur Karaṇas, as scholars feel, has been carved after a high and deep understanding of the description of the relevant Karaṇas found in Nāṭyaśāstra and its Commentary, the Abhinavabhārati of Abhinavagupta.

It is held that in most cases Lord Siva's four arms are utilized to bring out the dynamism of the movements. But Sri V. Raghavan says that the theory is not justified.<sup>109</sup> To an artiste, Padma Subrahmanyam holds, these movements clearly indicate the actions of not only the hands and the other limbs but even the mood each movement is expected to radiate. With regard to the hands, the main pair of arms show a particular moment of the movement while the other two show its course end. In support of her view, she cites Karaṇas, 11, 16, 27, 29, 41, 63, 65, 66, 67 and 71 as few examples. In some cases, she thinks that the hands holding Saivite emblems like the Trīśūlam, serpent, Vīna, Mazu etc., are very beautifully and meaningfully utilized. For example, in Karaṇa 4, the space between the hand holding the Katakāmukha gesture and the chest is expected to be eight Aṅgulas (about one span). She holds that this is beautifully endorsed in the sculpture by depicting Siva as holding a Vīna. She says that care was taken of in very subtle points even. According to her the depiction of forward movements in profile suggests space particularly in regard to direction. To her this characteristic method is akin to the style

of the Rajasthani paintings. She cites the examples of Karaṇas 50, 63 and 64 in support of her view.<sup>110</sup>

In 1958, 'Kāvērī' a local magazine, brought out the Karaṇa series in the Sāraṅgapāṇi temple at Kumbakōṇam. The "Archaeological Society of India-Transactions for the year 1958-59" contains a note by Sri P.R. Srinivasan on Karaṇa figures at Kumbakōṇam. They are said to belong to the later Chōla age, probably of 12th century A.D. They were traced from the outer surface of the Eastern Gōpuram of the Sāraṅgapāṇi temple. Below these figures are found the inscriptions of the respective names and numbers of the Karaṇas.

Sri T.N. Ramachandran identified them as human figures.<sup>111</sup> Sri P.R. Srinivasan seems to have taken them as the figures of Kṛishṇa.<sup>112</sup> Sri C. Sivaramamurti seems to have echoed the views of Sri P.R. Srinivasan.<sup>113</sup> But Padma Subrahmanyam identifies them all as the Karaṇa poses of Lord Siva. Her findings are based on the ground that the Siva Gaṇas accompany the figures.<sup>114</sup> She thinks that these Siva Karaṇa poses were transplanted from a ruined Siva temple to the present place. She has derived this conclusion from a study of a few Saivite figures found in a Vaiṣṇavite temple. The figures are that of Siva in Ūrdhva-tāṇḍava pose and of Kālī, probably in Maṇḍala-sthāna pose. These give these Karaṇas a Saivite character. They were re-set along with those in the temple. According to Sri P.R. Srinivasan this Ūrdhva-tāṇḍava figure is placed in the north east side of the Gōpuram, for which Rudra is the presiding deity. Taking into consideration the total eighteen hands and with the leg lifted as for the Karaṇa like Daṇḍapādam or Viṣṇukrāntam, she thinks that the Karaṇa figure, a rare one, is a combination of Ūrdhva-tāṇḍava and Kālīka-tāṇḍava. The equivalent inscription in Chola Grantha character helps this identification.

The serial order of the Kumbakōṇam Karaṇas is terribly disturbed. This was perhaps due to a jumble which was probably due to the transplantation of the Karaṇas from a Siva temple to a Viṣṇu temple. Sri T.N. Ramachandran was the first to notice this jumble.<sup>115</sup> Padma Subrahmanyam attributes

this disturbance to the lack of proper knowledge on the part of the artizans. The discovery of two more Karaṇa figures of this series, isolated and re-set in the base of another maṇḍapa in the Kumbēśvaraswāmi temple at Kumbakōṇam, itself suggests a possible jumble. The present series in the Sāraṅgapāṇi temple does not have all the 108 Karaṇas. This suggestion is further corroborated by a few dance panels found in another temple. The Tīrukkoḍikāval temple contains a few vaiśṇavite panels, obviously transplanted from elsewhere into the Gōpuram of an old Siva temple. One of them portrays the scene described by the great Vaiśṇavite Saint Periyālvār, in dealing with the charm of the magical flute of Krishṇa. But an inscription (ARE. 294/1927) engraved on the base of the mandapa in the outer southern Prakara, dated A.D. 1178, refers to the god Viprasabha patisvaram Udaiyar (i.e. Nataraja). This record was probably brought, from the neighbouring somanatha temple. Similarly, as Kapila Vatsyayan thinks, the slabs containing the dance Karanas belonged to the same somanatha temple of 12th or early 13th century.<sup>115a</sup> Hence, Padma Subrahmanyam says, "there can be no doubt that Karaṇa figures of Sarangapani temple are all those of Siva and not of Viṣṇu."<sup>116</sup> But, unfortunately, her chart on the Kumbakōṇam Karaṇas with the inscriptions, her identification and the location is not available.<sup>117</sup>

The artistic, aesthetic and literary maturity of the sculptor in the depiction of the complete Karaṇa figures could be seen in the Naṭarāja temple of Chidambaram. We learn from an inscription<sup>118</sup> that the niches on the inner walls of the East Gōpuram of the Nataraja temple contain the labels engraved below (?) images representing various dancing postures. Besides, the other three (Western, Southern and Northern) Gōpurams too contain these Karaṇas. While S. R. Balasubrahmanyam gives the later Chōḷa age of Vikrama and Kolōttuṅga II to the Eastern and Western Gōpuram.<sup>119</sup> Padma Subrahmanyam attributes a course of three centuries from 13th to 16th for the four Gōpurams.<sup>120</sup>

According to an inscription,<sup>121</sup> the East Gōpuram is said to have been built and decorated with Karaṇas by a King named



Mahārājasiṅha, probably Kōpperunjiṅgadēva. It is learnt from another inscription<sup>122</sup> that the South Gōpuram was built by a King named Cokkac-Cīyan, probably Kōpperunjiṅgadēva. This biruda occurs in many inscriptions<sup>123</sup> referring to this Kādavar King. As seen already, he was also praised as an expert in Bharatanāṭya ("Bharata Mallāṇ and Bharatam Vallān").<sup>124</sup> These data prove, beyond doubt, that Kōpperunjiṅgaṇ had contributed a lot to the enrichment of Bharatanāṭya in the temple of Chidambaram.

Of all the Karaṇa figures, the most striking and imposing ones are sculptured in the Eastern and the Western Gōpurams of the Naṭarāja temple at Chidambaram. Above each Karaṇa pose is inscribed the equivalent transliteration of the Bharata Nāṭyaśāstra sūtra in Tamiḻ Grantha script. The Epigraphical Report for the year 1914 published the inscriptions with ninety-three figures in the form of wood cuts. As many figures were mutilated, it was impossible for them to identify all the figures and equivalent sūtras. The first Edition of the Gaekwad Series on Nāṭyaśāstra too did not include all the 108 Karaṇa poses. B. V. Naidu, P. S. Naidu and O. V. R. Pantulu jointly brought out the famous work Tāṇḍavalakṣaṇam in 1936 with photographs of all the Karaṇas. The second Edition of the Gaekwad Series included a scholarly study of the Karaṇas in the Preface of the book by Sri Ramaswami Sastri. Unfortunately, he interpreted every Karaṇa as a static and complete pose. Sri V. Raghavan made a detailed study of the Karaṇas in an introduction to his work, Nr̥ttaratnāvalī, based only on the above mentioned sources.

But, unfortunately, none of these works have followed the serial order as seen in the Gōpurams. In Tāṇḍavalakṣaṇa 44 Karaṇas are wrongly identified. In the second Edition of the Nāṭyaśāstra of the Gaekwad series, 23 Karaṇas are wrongly illustrated due to voluntary changes made by Ramaswamy Sastri as well as due to unintentional mistakes.<sup>125</sup> But, so far as the first fifty-three figures are concerned, there is unanimity amongst these scholars. There is, however, a great divergence of opinion regarding the remaining 55 Karaṇas.<sup>126</sup>

Ramaswami Sastri thought\* that the postures have been cut on rocks with appropriate verses from the Nāṭyaśāstra

underneath each of the postures. Except 93 postures, the remaining were thought either damaged or the compartments altered during repairs<sup>127</sup>. However, some deliberate changes in the choice of the postures to suit the descriptions is noticed in his identification. Padma Subrahmanyam cites an instances of such deliberate change. Instead of the 65th Karaṇa, he seems to have placed the posture of 82nd Karaṇa. The 65th Karaṇa, according to her, is illustrated in the proper place in the Gōpuram<sup>128</sup>. Sri Sastri took the poses as static ones ; hence this mistake. Kapila Vatsyayan thinks that in most cases, the sculptors have attempted to capture the spirit of the movement at a given point, and the Karaṇas of the groups Vṛscita, Svastika and a few derived from the cāris have been fairly accurately sculptured<sup>129</sup>. But his chart of the Karaṇas 54-108 as found in the different compartments of the four towers of the temple is very valuable. In this he had compared the names and numbers of his order with the previous publications<sup>130</sup>. A recent comparative study and identification of the Karaṇas with specific charts has been made by Kapila Vatsyayan<sup>131</sup>.

It is reported that there is some kind of disorder in the respective postures and sūtras. It has been complained that a specific sūtra meant for a specific posture is found inscribed below another Karaṇa pose<sup>132</sup>. However, Padma Subrahmanyam is so certain that the inscriptions are all above the postures. When they are in the right order, there is no chance for displacement of postures. According to her the serial order is practically the same in all the Gōpurams except in the Northern Gōpuram, where some dislocation is noticed. Hence she concludes that "there is no discrepancy in the order of the Karaṇas, at least, in three Gōpurams and that all the 108 are in tact with a major number of inscriptions well preserved "<sup>133</sup>.

The Karaṇa postures were cut out vertically in 14 pilasters in the four Gōpurams. The inner walls of the Gōpurams contain seven (not eight or nine in the case of the west Gōpuram)<sup>134</sup> compartments of equal size (15" sq.). Each compartment is topped by a Kapōda, a miniature Vāli frieze

and a patta. Each of these compartment contains a posture. Padma Subrahmanyam thinks that the first posture is found as the bottom most figure in the first pilaster on the left side. The second is above the first and thus the serial order is maintained. The series proceeds upwards in all the pilasters. After the top most figure on the seventh pilaster, it continues from the bottom most figure of the first pilaster, again on the left side in the temple<sup>135</sup>.

The number of postures in each pilaster of the four Gōpurams has some Variation. According to Sri Sastri the seven pilasters contain 54 Karaṇas<sup>136</sup>. But Padma Subrahmanyam's and the author's field work show only 53 Karaṇas on this side. The opposite side has 55 Karaṇas. In the Southern Gōpuram four Karaṇas are missing and the Northern Gōpuram contains 109 postures. The absence of Karaṇa 11 (Kaṭicchinnam) in its proper place caused some disorder.

Instead of the Lord, all the postures were cut out as if a dancing damsel is performing the Karaṇas. Each compartment contains the figures of the dancing-girl flanked by two male figures, a drummer and a chimer who keeps the rhythm. Considering the hairdo, Padma Subrahmanyam takes the female figure to be Parvati Devī.<sup>137</sup> But this author, taking into consideration similar postures with the same hairdo in other temples, thinks that the figure represents a Dēvadāsi, the dancing-girl of the temple. Dancing-girls in moderate size are chiseled out in other places with patience and dexterity. With full blown ecstatic feminine charm, their facial expressions vary with the Karaṇas. The dancing female postures depicted in many a temple reveal the mastray in the art. T. Satyamurti thinks that the choice of female figures was due to some religious fervour and devotion.<sup>138</sup>

Some difference of opinion exists as to the nature of the movement depicted in the Karaṇa postures. Sri. V. Raghavan holds that there is no basis in Bharata tradition as to seated figures as portrayed in Kumbakōṭam and Chidambaram. He thinks that they are correctly depicted as standing figures at

Tanjāvūr and hence attributes a Dēsi character to those of the other two.<sup>139</sup> But Padma Subramanyam holds that as based on kinetic principles, Bharata Nāṭyaśāstra could not have ignored the possibility of sitting movements. According to her, Chapter XIII of Nāṭyaśāstra describes sthānas positions. Hence her conclusion that all sitting postures need not belong to the Dēśi tradition.<sup>140</sup>

Much work has to be done to study the Karaṇas figures portrayed in the outer Eastern Gōpuram of the Aruñāchalēśvarar temple, Tijruvaṇṇāmalai and those of the Vridhagiriśvarar temple at Vridhāchalam by the Vijayagar rulers. Similarly, specific study has to be made on some of the unclassified dancing figures as in Bāhūr (Pōṇḍichēry) and Pērūr (Coimbatore).

### **Historical value :**

A study of the Bharatanāṭya images in the temples throws some new light on a few aspects of the history of medieval Tamilnadu. Their imprint could be discerned from the philosophical, religious, educational, technical, social, political, economic and cultural ramifications of the land. Besides the ideological and metaphysical import of the Siva tāṇḍavas, the dancing postures have some religious significance. The bhakti literatures bring out a kind of rivalry that existed among the Hindu sects and the most philosophical religious of the Jainism and Buddhism in Tamilnadu. Śiva Tāṇḍava and Karaṇa postures exposes the twin aspects of Lord Siva - the forceful and the blissful. By his forceful form, he destroyed the strongholds of his rivals and by his blissful form the embraced the vanquished. Padma Subrahmanyam thinks that the suppression of the hooded cobra, the Kāṇkōṭa, and Siva's Ānanda tāṇḍava and the chastisement of the elephant and Siva's dance over its head symbolise the victory of the Saivites over the Nāgas and the Buddhists respectively. To quote her "The story of the antagonistic Rishis of Dārukāvanam sending forth the serpents, tiger, elephant, and finally the Apasmāra as missiles against Siva Bikshāṭana is clear proof of the religious conflicts and the final establishments of Saivism."<sup>141</sup> The Nataraja dance sculptures confirm

the philosophical conviction that Lord Siva was the originator and master of the art of dance and Tillai (Chidambaram), according to later Purāṇas, as the blissful stage of his Cosmic Dance. Thus Tamilnadu has become the museum and art gallery of the tradition of dance enumerated in Bharata Nāṭyaśāstra.

David Dean Shulman thinks that the Siva tāṇḍava is a form of marriage, the male-dominating marriage which Siva must accept in his exemplar to his devotees<sup>142</sup>. The forceful Ūrdhva tāṇḍava of Siva indicates the male domination over females of the society. This social transformation dealt with a crushing blow on the vestiges of women's liberty. The costumes and coiffure, hairdo and physical expositions, as depicted in the postures, help us to reconstruct some social practices and behaviour of men and women in society. They throw light on the kinds of textile and cosmetics industries that produced them. According to M. Rajamanickam the sculptures inform us of the (i) the types and qualities of ornaments worn by the dancing girls, (iv) decoration of their hairdo, (iii) greatness of the dress, (iv) the secrecy and popularity of the art of dancing.<sup>143</sup>

The dance panels depicted in the temples stand as testimony to the peoples love of the art. As visual pictures of momentary movements they serve as means of visual education.<sup>144</sup>

They thus do the role of museums and art galleries. Padma Subramanyam holds that the Chidambaram temple is an Encyclopaedia of Dance Art in stone. As a perpetual library for an intellectual and practical understanding of Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra,<sup>145</sup> they proclaim the continuity of the tradition of Nāṭyaśāstra in Tamilnadu. Engraved in 'rocks of ages', the sculptors gave life to the text of Bharata Nāṭyaśāstra. The sculptors have freely rendered the voluptuous physical aspects of the dancing girls, which reveal the artistic, technical, aesthetic and literary attainments of the sculptors themselves. Under royal patronage, the sculptors took care to perpetuate the art of dance in stone to convey the delight of dance they enjoyed to future generations.<sup>146</sup> By infusing new life into the Karaṇa poses, the sculptors imparted

to them beauty, rhythm, attraction and vibration. By depicting the musicians as pigmies with their musical instruments such as Mṛdaṅga and cymbal, the sculptors instructed the artistes that in a dance recital, the dancer is more important than the musicians. That was why they were kept in the background.

The postures tell us a lot about the political and economic condition of medieval Tamilnadu. They testify to the political peace and material prosperity of certain periods. Under Rājarāja I, Kulōtuṅga I, Kōpperuṇjiṅgadēva and Krishnadēvarāya, the Tamil country enjoyed some peace and prosperity. As guardians of our culture, the rulers of Medieval Tamilnadu, have, without any reservation, spent huge amount of the income of the State in maintaining the cultural traditions of our country.

## NOTES AND REFERENCE

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2. Maṇimēkhalai, 2:18-32.
3. T.V. Mahalingam, (Ed.), Report on the Excavations in the Lower Kaveri Valley. 1962-64, Madras, 1970, p. 58.
4. S.R. Balasubrahmanyam, Early Chola Temples, Madras 1971, p. 272.
5. Vedanta Desika's (13th century A.D.) 'fanciful pun' on the name of Bharata as acrostic of the initial syllables of bhāva, rāga and tāḷa (Śaṅkalpa Sūryodaya, Act (1) seems to have created some confusion among later writers Cf. Ikkatu Rattinavelu Mudaliar, (Ed.), Paraṇcōti Munivar Aruliya Tiruviḷayāṭal Purāṇam, Madras, 1937, p. 619. V. 8; K.A. Nilakanta Sastri and K. R. Venkataraman, "The Tamils and the Art of Dance, "Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures, Madras, 1971, p. 13.
6. The Kashmiri origin to Bharata was given by Ms. Padma Subramanyam, an expert in Bharatanatyam (Bharata's Art then and Now, Madras. 1979, p. 20) Justice Maharajan

on some sound grounds had rejected her claim. The present author, on an analysis of some available data, thinks that Bharata was a South Indian, who had mastery over all the works on dramaturgy, dance and the allied arts.

7. Kapila Vatsyayan, *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts*, New Delhi, 1977, pp. 34-36; E. Krishna Iyer in his preface to Enakshi Bhavani's, *The Dance in India*, Bombay, 1970, p. XI; Tarapada Bhattacharyya, *The Canons of Indian Art or a Study on Vastuvidya*, Calcutta, 1963, pp. 329-330; *Journal of Bihar (and Orissa) Research Society*, 1923, Pt. I, pp. 60-62.
8. Kapila Vatsyayan, *op. cit.* 142.
9. Manamohan Ghosh, (Eng. Tr. and Ed.), *The Nāṭyaśāstra*, Vol. I Calcutta, 1967, pp. XXXVII-XL; Kapila Vatsyayan, *op. cit.*, p. 34, Padma Subrahmanyam, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
10. Tamilak-Kūttu and Āryak-Kūttu; Cākkaik-kūttu and Śāntik-kūttu; Agamārgam and Sokkam; Sandik-Kunippam and Sindākkū, etc. (S.I.I., Vol. V. No. 718; A.R.E. of 1925, No. 120; *Ibid.*, No. 250 of 1926; PSI., (Texts), No. 128, A.R.E., 1913, Pt. ii, para 51; S.I.T.I., Vol. I, No. 525).
11. *Cil.*, 3:158.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 10. Adiyarkkunallar of the 12th century A.D. quotes passages from this work.
13. C. Minakshi, *Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas*, Madras, 1977, p. 311.
14. *Indian Antiquary*, LII (1923), pp. 45-47 (I.A.).
15. *I.A.*, X, p. 167.
- 15a. Yazdani, (Ed.), *The Early History of the Deccan*, I, p. 242.
16. S. Gurumurthi, "Education and Fine Arts in South Indian Inscriptions," *Journal of Madras University*, Vol. XLIX. No. 1. January 1977, p. 74.
17. C. Minakshi, *op. cit.*, pp. 311-19.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 312.
19. S. Gurumurthi, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

- 20 (a). S.I.I., Vol. XII, Pt. i, No. 120, A.R. No. 286/1921.
- 20 (b). V. Mahadevan, *Kalveṭṭut-tēntuḷikaḷ*, Tiruppananthai, 1979, p. 90.
- 20 (c). S.I.I., Vol. XII, Pt. I, No. 119; A.R. No. 285/1921.
- 20 (d) Ibid., No. 181; A.R., No. 50/1922.
21. Parañcōti Munivar, *Tiruvīlaiyāṭarpurāṇam*, Kālmāṇi Āṭina Paṭalam.
22. Kapila Vatsyayan, op. cit., pp. 268-69.
23. Ibid., p. 269.
24. R. Nagaswami (Ed.) *Damilica*, Vol. I. pt. I, p. 1 (See pl. 2—5), Madras, 1970.
25. Pulavar Senthurai Muttu, *Āya Kālaikaḷ Arupattunāngu*, Madras, 1978, p. 112.
26. "Vaikunṭhaperumal Temple," North Wall Panel XII, See C. Minakshi, op. cit., p. 313.
27. Suresh B. Pillai, *Study of Temple Art*, Pt. II, Tanjavur, 1976, p. 69.
28. Ibid., pp. 69—70.
29. C. Minakshi, op. cit., p. 312; R. Nagaswamy and M. Chandramurti think that the palm shows the Abhayamudra. (*Tamiḷakak Kōvir Kalaikal*, Madras, 1973, p. 111).
30. C. Minakshi, op. cit., p. 312.
31. R. Nagaswamy and M. Chandramurti, op. cit., p. 111.
32. C. Bose, *Varalāṭṭil Dēvadāsigaḷ*, Madras, 1976, p. 97.
33. C. Govindarajanar, *Tamilaha Varalāṭṭu Ceithigal*, Madras, 1962, p. 27.
34. S.I.I., Vol. II, Pt. III, No. 66.
35. C. Govindarajanar, op. cit., pp. 28-35.
36. Suresh B. Pillai, op. cit., p. 32.
37. Ibid., p. 80.
38. Ibid., p. 7.



39. T.A.S., Vol. IV, Pt. I, No. 43 (A.S. Ramanatha Ayyar, "Two Sculptured Panels at Trivikramaṅgalam", To face p. 59).
40. Natyasastra, V. 85.
41. Ramanatha Ayyar makes this comparison. But Kapila Vatsyayan identifies it as Karana prsthavastika, which does not appear to be correct when compared with the same Karana listed in the Epigraphical cut-outs. (See the Nos. 31 and 43 in the Epigraphical Report).
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43. Kapila Vatsyayan, op. cit., p. 316.
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56. Kapila Vatsyayan, op. cit., p. 269.
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115. T.N. Ramachandran, *The Mail*. A recently discovered inscription probably confirms this disorder and jumble. The fragmentary inscription in 12th century Tamil characters, on the base of the Kumbakōṇam gōpuram, refers to an endowment of a perpetual lamp to Siva of Thirumayānam in the village, Chōḷamāṟṟhāṇḍa chatuṟvēdimangalam, in the sub-division of Mannināḍu. Mr. R. Nagaswami feels that the dance panels also belong to this Siva temple. See the *Hindu*, 28th May. 1976).
115. (a) Kapila Vatsyayan, *Dance Sculpture in sārāṅgapāni Temple* Madras. 1982, pp. 8-9.
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117. The present writer regrets to inform that his attempt to refer to Padma Subrahmanyam's Ph.D., thesis on the "Karanas in Indian Dance and Sculpture" could not materialize owing to some pretext.
118. A. R. E. of 1913, No. 343.
119. S. R. Balasubrahmanyam. op. cit., (1971), p. 288.
120. Padma Subrahmanyam in her article published in Indian Music Journal, pp. 18-19.
121. A.R. for 1906. Pt. II, Para 5. The trilingual inscription from Tripurantakam in the Kurnool District was noticed by Rai Bahadur Venkayya.
122. S. I. I., Vol. XII. No. 119; A. R. E., 285/1921.
123. Ibid., No. 181; A.R.E., 50/1922; Ibid., No. 119; A.R.E. 285/1921.
124. S. I. I.. Vol. XII, Pt. i, No. 120; A. R. E., 286/1921. Cf. V. Mahadevan. op. cit.. p. 90.
125. Padma Subrahmanyam, op. cit., 1979, p. 64.
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127. Nāṭyasāstra, (G.O.S.) I, Preface, p. 38 (Second Edition).
128. Padma Subrahmanyam, op. cit., p. 64.
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133. Padma Subrahmanyam, op. cit., p. 66.
134. T. Satyamurti, The Naṭarāja Temple, New Delhi, 1978, p. 30.
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137. Padma Subramanyam, op. cit., p. 66.
138. T. Satyamurti, op. cit., pp. 48-50.
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142. David Dean Shulman, op. cit., p., 223.
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144. Vidvan T. Pattuchami Oduvar, (Ed.), Paranjōti Munivar's Tiruviḷaiyāṭar Purāṇam, Tiruppanandal, 1951, introduction, p. 21.
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# **Temples in Kanyakumari District**

**Dr. S. Padmanabhan**

## **An abstract of the paper**

(KANYAKUMARI, is the southernmost district of India. The name of the district is unique in the sense that it is named after our Mother Goddess Parasakthi. It is protected by the Goddess in different names in all the corners of the district. The District is blessed with several reputed temples of legendary, historical, architectural and artistic importance.

Legendary importance goes to the temples at Kanyakumari, Suchindrum, Tirupparappu, Tiruvattar, Tiruppathisaram and Tirusanamkoppu. In the district there are a few rare shrines which one cannot see elsewhere. The Vivekananda Rock Memorial, a temple of 20th century is a symbol of our ancient cultural heritage.

One can find different types of art and architecture in Kanyakumari District. The sweet sound produced by the musical pillars of Suchindrum temple, the beauty of the wooden panels depicting the story of Ramayana found in the Ramaswamy temple at Padmanabhapuram, the exquisite wooden carvings of Udayamarthanda mandapa in Tiruvattar temple, the religious integration of Nagaraja temple at Nagercoil and the cultural integration of Padmanabhapuram temples are the important features of the temples in Kanyakumari District.)

KANYAKUMARI is the southernmost district of India. The name of the district is unique in the sense that it is named after the divine Mother, Goddess Parasakthi. Kanyakumari literally means Virgin Goddess. No other district in India can claim a divine fame in name. Goddess Parasakthi in the name of Devi Kanyakumari stands at the tip of the peninsula in Her eternal penance to save Her Children from the ocean and radiates sanctity all round.

Kanyakumari is one of the smallest district of our land. This small stretch of land is protected by Mother Goddess

under different names at the different corners of the district. She is Devi Kanyakumari in the Land's end of India, Bhagavathi in Mandaikadu, Kali in Kollenkodu, Esakki in Muppandali Maenakshi in Aralvaimozhi, Kamakshi in Vadasery, Bhuvaneswari in Oluginasery, Anandavalli in Padmanabhapuram, Sivakami in Boothapandi, Badreswari in Koottalumoodu and Aramvalartha Amman in Suchindram. Besides being in the name of Mother Goddess, this district is also considered to be Her abode:

### **Temples of legendary importance**

Kanyakumari is blessed with several reputed temples of legendary, historical, architectural and artistic importance. Legendary importance goes to the temples at Kanyakumari, Suchindram, Tirupparappu, Tiruvattar, Tirupathisaram and Tirusaramkoppu.

The "VEL" of Lord Subramanya represents Gnana i.e., divine knowledge. It is called Gnanavel. The very length, breadth, and sharpness of Vel signify knowledge. The district of Kanyakumari, the Land's end promontory of India which resembles the holy Vel, is also a land of knowledge. Devi who is the Sakthi or Divine power of the Supreme Being selected Kanyakumari, the Land's end, where the three oceans lie locked in perpetual embrace, as Her abode. The main attribute of knowledge is sharpness. The very pin-point of Kanyakumari in the geographical map of India signifies knowledge. Devi Kanyakumari otherwise known as Gnanambika selected Kanyakumari as a symbolic abode of Gnana. At Kanyakumari, Devi Parasakthi is said to have annihilated Banasura, the embodiment of evil and ignorance, the destruction of which is a pre-requisite to enlightenment and true wisdom. It may be a legend but we cannot deny the fact that the district of Kanyakumari has been very progressive in the field of education. It has the highest literacy rate in Tamil Nadu.

Kanyakumari in the South is considered to be the abode of Sakthi while the Himalayas of North is the abode of Lord Siva. The multi-coloured sands on the beach of Kanyakumari containing Thorium, which generates Atomic energy, is the manifestation of the miraculous power of the Supreme. It is a symbolic representation of Divine power or Sakthi. Legend adds that Parasakthi in



the name of Kanyakumari is doing penance in the southern end to gain the hand of Lord Siva who is on meditation in the Himalayas of North. Thus the North and the South have been spiritually connected from time immemorial.

There is another temple named Guhanandeswaram to Kanyakumari. According to the Sthalapurana of Kanyakumari the deity is called Guhanandeswarar. Searching for a suitable place of worship, Guha (Subramanya) selected Kanyakumari and erected there an image of Iswara for his worship. The image of Iswara worshipped by Guha became Guhanandeswara. The words "Guhan thanai aanda Isan" appeared in the Sthalapurana confirm the name of the deity as Guhanandeswarar. It is interesting to note that there is a village known as "Saravanantheri" near the temple. From the inscriptions found in the temple we learn that the temple was renovated by the Chola King Raja Raja I in 1000 A.D.<sup>1</sup> In the inscriptions the place is called Rajarajeswaram. It is interesting to note that Thanjavur has also the same name Rajarajeswaram.

### **Suchindrum**

Suchindrum, another temple of legendary importance is the spiritual metropolis of Nanjilnadu the nucleus of Kanyakumari District. The presiding deity of the Temple is Sthanumalaya. Sthanu means Siva, Mal for Vishnu and Iyan for Brahma. It is the only temple dedicated to TRINITY. Legend has it that Tirumurthis, in response to the prayer of Sage Atri and his devoted wife Anusaya, appeared in their hermitage at Gnanaranya (Asramam near Suchindrum).

Tradition goes that Indra was purified at this place and hence the name Suchindrum. Suchi means purity. In order to secure redemption from the curse for his misbehaviour towards Ahalya, Indra commenced a severe penance at Gnanaranya. Finally Lord Siva appeared before him and allowed him to return to heaven on condition that he has to worship at Suchindrum every night. It is believed that even today the Ardhayamapuja in the temple is performed by Indra himself. On the basis of this notion, the officiating priests are changed daily and they should take an oath

not to reveal whatever that is observed inside the sanctum. "Agam kandathai puram kurathe" are the words after which they take their oath.

The penance of Indra and the service of elephant are depicted in Thevaram of Sambandar. To get water for conducting pujas, Indra directed his elephant Airavathi to cause a river to flow from the Malaya mountain. The elephant proceeded to the mountain thrust it by its tusk and caused a river to flow towards Gnanaranya. This episode led to the river being called Danta nadi or Kottar<sup>2</sup> (Kodu means tusk). The mural paintings at Suchindrum temple depicts these incidents dramatically.<sup>3</sup> The city on the bank of the river also came to be known by the same name Kottaru.

The legends concerning the temples of both Suchindrum and Kanyakumari bear a close inter connection. The popular belief is that the sacred water anointing the image of Sthanumalaya of Suchindrum reaches Kanyakumari by an underground tunnel. One of the sixteen theerthas at Kanyakumari is called Sthanumalaya theertha. That the God at Suchindrum sought the hand of the Virgin Goddess at Kanyakumari is a matter of common Tradition.<sup>4</sup>

### **Tiruppathisarm and Tiruvattar**

Another temple of legendary importance is Tiruppathisaram otherwise known as Tiruvanparisaram. At Suchindrum, God appeared in the form of Siva before the Saptharishis. At Tiruppathisarm God gave them darshan in the form of Vishnu as prayed for by them. Tiruvazhimarbar the main deity of the temple is surrounded by the images of Saptharishis. At Tiruvattar Adisesha, the Commander of Lord Vishnu encircled the Asura named Kesa in his gigantic coils and formed a bed for his Lord. This incident coins the name of the Lord, Adi Kesava. The presiding deity of Tiruvattar is a Sayanamurthi stretched out on his commodious serpent bed. Nammalwar praised Tiruvanparisaram and Tiruvattar in his verses.

### **Tirupparappu**

The temple of Mahadeva at Tirupparappu is also a centre of legendary importance. It is said that after the annihilation

of Daksha, Lord Siva selected this place of beauty for his deep meditation. According to the local tradition there was a shrine of Bhadrakali by the side of the waterfalls near the temple of Mahadeva. So the waterfalls came to be known Bhadrakali falls. The very word Tirupparappu denotes a pavilion of beauty and sacredness. The panoramic view of the shrine with green hills and the perennial river Kodayar running in front of the shrine is really fascinating and attractive. The sparkling waterfalls on the south-western side of the temple are a rich feast to the eyes. Thus the pavilion presents a peerless picture of scenic beauty and enchantment.

### **Tirusanamkoppu**

According to tradition Sri Rama erected two shrines in his life. Both are in the southernmost part of India. One is the world known temple of Ramanatha at Rameswaram and the other is the less known shrine of Raghaveswara at Tirusanamkoppu in Kanyakumari District. On the western bank of the river Palayar stands the ancient temple. It is believed that the temple of Siva at Tirusanamkoppu was consecrated by Shri Rama himself to get redemption from the sin of Sthrihatya (slaying of a woman). Hence the presiding deity of the temple is called Raghaveswara (Easwara worshipped by Raghava i.e. Rama). The name of the village Tirusanamkoppu is said to be derived from the Tamil words Tiru saram korppu. It means the place where the arrow Sri Rama pierced the body of Thadakai. There is also a shrine of Viswamithra at Vijayapathi in the border of the district. The temple of Raghaveswara at Tirusanamkoppu was erected by Sri Rama in Balakanda, while the temple of Ramanatha at Rameswaram was erected by him in the Yuddahkanda. So it can be surmised that the temple of Tirusanamkoppu was erected earlier than the temple of Rameswaram. Near the village stands a hill called "Thadakaimalai" which is said to be the abode of Thadakai. It is interesting to note that the red-stained rock in the name of the demoness resembles the body of a gignatic woman with matted locks.

### **Sources of history**

The history of the temples in India is closely connected with the history of its people. We in the south have our history

codified from the inscriptions and other documents preserved in the temples. They throw a flood of light on the political, social and economic life of the people. Thus the temples serve as sources of our history. A copper plate inscription dated 866 A.D. informs us that Kokkarunandakkam of Ay dynasty (857-885 A.D.) consecrated a temple at Parthivasekharapuram in Kanyakumari District and established there a salai (College of Vedic studies) in which arrangements were made to give free boarding, lodging and tuition to 90 students. The inscription gives a brief description of the University, the conditions for admitting students, the rules and regulations of the University and the punishment meted out to mischievous students.

### **University of modern conception**

They have imparted advanced courses of study, in theory as well as in practice, in the administration of the country both in the civil and the military branches of Government. One who gets a certificate from five teachers is eligible for admission in the University. If a student speaks abusively of others within the precincts of the temple, he shall eat in the hostel only after paying a fine of five gold coins to the elders. If he beats others, he shall take his meals by paying a fine of one kasu. No kind of deceit shall be practised. They shall not fight within the precincts of the temple. Those who fight shall lose the day's meal (kalam). They shall not stop on any excuse the daily routine of worship. The servant (panimakkal) who speaks abusively of the students has to pay a fine of one kasu. It was a centre of learning more or less in the nature of a free residential university of modern conception.<sup>5</sup>

### **Political History**

An inscription found in the temple of Mahadeva at Vadasery brings to light valuable information about the social and political history of the people of Nanjilnad in early days. It registers the resolutions passed by the ryots of Nanjilnad relating to the stoppage of certain tax payments due to the disorderly state of the country consequent on the Nayak invasions from the Kollam Era 352 (1677 A.D.)<sup>6</sup>. Mudaliar Palm-leaf records also confirm this revolution of the people of Nanjilnad against the state there.

The high degree of political consciousness that prevailed among the people of Nanjilnad, the remarkable unity and co-operation shown by them during turbulent days and their strong faith in God can be appraised from the resolutions passed by them in their meeting. "It was perhaps in these meetings of early Nanjilnadian", remarks Kavimany Desikavinayagam Pillai "that the political weapon of non-cooperation was forged for the first time in the annals of our country".<sup>7</sup>

### **The battle of Colachel**

The Adi Kesava Temple at Tiruvattar was associated with the war between the King of Venad and the Dutch army which took place at Colachel in 1741 A.D. It appears from the Devaswom accounts that Marthandavarma proceeded to Tiruvattar, the shrine of the royal family, on the 10th June, 1741 and worshipping and invoking the God to aid him against the Dutch placed his sword before the idol of the temple and received it back from the officiating priest with the God's blessings. He then marched to the scene of war, conducted the battle in person and with the grace of Adi Kesava returned in triumph. The battle of Colachel was a great disaster to the Dutch and it put an end to their dreams of conquering our country. A pillar commemorating the victory of the Venad King over the Dutch stands on the beach of Colachel in Kanyakumari District.

From the inscriptions of Suchindrum Temple we learn that Nanjilnad was under the Chola supremacy during the period of Raja Raja Chola. This is inferred from the Suchindrum inscriptions. While the one that of his 10th year describes the place merely as "Nanchilnattu Tirucivindram" the other of the 14th year calls it "Rajaraja Valanattu Tirucivindrum". In the still later Chola inscriptions, Nanjiland was described as a sub-division of "Uttamachola Valanadu" which in its turn, was a district of "Rajaraja pandinadu".<sup>8</sup>

Fr. Bartholomew of 17th century mentioned the famous jugglers of Kottar in his travelogue. This fact is confirmed by the images found in the Alageswari temple at Vadiveeswaram. In the temple we can see the image of a juggler facing upward, balancing an inverted sharp dagger on the tip

of his nose while rotating a saucer on the tip of the lifted forefinger of his right hand and playing 'ammanai' with his animated left hand and left foot manoeuvring two balls. In another pillar one juggler stands in a balancing pose with his right foot on a stick vertically placed on the back of a pig. Thus the several inscriptions and images found in the temples of Kanyakumari District reveal abundant historical facts of the district.

### **Art and Architecture**

Architecturally we find several types of temples in Kanyakumari District. The Nagaraja temple of Chera style, the Cholarajakoil of Chola style and the Suchindrum temple of Pandya style clearly show the impact of Chera, Chola and Pandya rule in Kanyakumari. There are several temples with conical vimana of Kerala style in Kalkulam and Vilavankodu taluks of Kanyakumari District. There is a natural cave temple at Chitharal and a rock-cut cave temple at Tirunandikkarai. The two tiered vimana in the Mahadeva temple at Palliyadi is unique.

Besides the presiding deity Nagaraja there are separate shrines of Siva and Vishnu in the Nagaraja temple at Nagercoil. The pillars of the temple bear the images of Jain Tirthankaras. The southern gateway of the temple of Nagaraja reminds us of the Buddhist architecture. Thus the temple of Nagaraja at Nagercoil stands as a symbol of fusion, of Saivism, Vaishnavism, Jainism and Buddhism.

The flourishing land of Nanjilnad also attracted the Vijayanagar chieftains and Nayak rulers. The temple of Suchindrum is a complex of many structures built at various times by different dynasties. The early Pandyas, the Cholas, the Venad kings of Chera line, the Nayak rulers and the Vijayanagar Kings have all had their share in the making of the temple. We find the image of Tirumala Nayak and of Rama Varma in Suchindrum temple. The imposing gopura nearly 135 feet in height, the Kailasanatha temple on the rock, the Chenpakaraman mandapa with a huge pavilion embellished with exquisite carvings in stone, the Unchalmandapa where

the Tirukalyanam festival is celebrated, Kulasekhara mandapa with the famous musical pillars, Vasanthamandapa in which the Utsava deities are kept during the summer season, Alankara mandapa where the decoration of the Vahanas takes place during the festivals and the Chitra Sabha containing the image of Lord Nataraja surrounded by several deities are some of the fine edifices of the temple.

### **Store-house of art**

The temple at Suchindrum may be considered one of the store-houses of the richest specimens of art in stone. The colossal monolithic image of Anjaneya with Anjali hastha, the Navagraha mandapa where the twelve zodiacal signs and nine planets are displayed on the ceiling, the musical pillars cut out of a single block of granite stone, which produce sounds of different musical instruments when tapped are worth to see. There are some rare pieces of sculptures in the temple. The feminine form of Ganesa equipped with the face and trunk of an elephant, known as Vigneswari, Juaradevar, a rare form of Samharamurthi, Nilakanta Vinayaka with his consort on his lap and the image of Parthasarathi with three faces of Tirumurthis Brahma, Vishnu and Siva delivering the message of Gita are among them.

### **Fusion of Tamil and Kerala types**

In the Adi Kesava temple at Tiruvattar, the life-like images of Lakshmana, Indrajit, Venugopal, Sakthi and Nataraja with Vishnu and Brahma having musical instruments on either side of the Balibeeda mandapa are of Tamilnadu style while the Ottakkal mandapa which stands on a piece of granite slab measuring 18 feet square and 3 feet thickness in front of the sanctum and the Udayamarthanda mandapa containing some fine pieces of wooden carvings are of Kerala type. Thus the temple of Tiruvattar may be regarded as a fusion of Tamil and Kerala types of art and architecture.

Padmanabhapuram, the ancient capital of Venad rulers contains two famous temples - one is dedicated to Lord Siva known as Neelakandaswamy and the other to Sri Rama, the

incarnation of Lord Vishnu. While the Neelakandaswamy temple is considered to be a fine example of Tamil art and architecture, the Ramaswamy temple is purely of Kerala type. Thus the city unifies Saivism and Vaishnavism and the temples may be regarded as splendid monuments representing the Tamil and Kerala types of art and architecture. There is a five tiered gopura forming the entrance to the shrine of Neelakandaswamy and one of the pillars of the temple contains the image of Tirumal Nayak of Madurai. The image of Anandavalli Amman in the sub-shrine has a close resemblance to that of Madurai Meenakshi Amman.

In the Ramaswamy temple at Padmanabhapuram the complete story of Ramayana is depicted dramatically around the exterior portion of the inner prakaram in 45 wooden panels, the artistic beauty of which can be realised only when seen. Art lovers can spend several hours in the temple, looking over the embellished carvings, which will take them back to the period of the Ramayana. The exquisite carvings can be considered some of the best specimens of wood carvings in the whole of India.

There is a shrine of Saraswathi at Padmanabhapuram. It has been a custom to send the image of Saraswathi to the Padmanabhaswamy temple at Trivandrum for the celebration of Navarathri festival. Even today the custom continues. There is a firm tradition that Kambar brought the image of Saraswathi to Padmanabhapuram during his exile.

### **Rare Shrines :**

In Kanyakumari District there are a few rare shrines, which one cannot see elsewhere. There are three shrines of Avvaiyar in the district. One is at Thazhakudi. The belief is that it was here that the immortal poetess left this mortal world. The temple and also the place are called Avvaiyarammankovil. Another shrine of Avvaiyar is at Muppandal. There is a legend that Avvaiyar had arranged for the marriage of her one-time patron's daughters near Aralvaimozhi to which she invited Chera, Chola and Pandya kings. Three separate pandals were erected there and this event led to the place being called Muppandal. There are remnants of three separate mandapas and a shrine of Avvaiyar in the midst. Two images of Avvaiyar are enshrined at Muppandal.



Muppandal is situated at the entrance to Kanyakumari District. Every vehicle passing that way stops for a few moments to enable the passengers worship the deified poetess. The rock-cut cave temple at Kurathiyarai near Alagiapandipuram is also called Avvaiyammankoil. It is interesting to note that Alagiapandipuram is mentioned in the inscription and palm leaf records as "Adigan Urana Alagiapandipuram"<sup>8</sup>. The close relationship between Avvaiyar and Adigan is well-known.

There is a rare shrine at Karungal where the images of Bagavathi, Vishnu and Siva are enshrined in one Sanctum. It is also a rare feature that Siva is enshrined here in His original form i.e. He holds deer and axe (Mazhu) in His parastha and His Poorvasthan shows the mudras of Abhaya and Varadha. This is the only shrine in India where Siva is enshrined in his original form. There is a shrine of Sri Krishna at Tippiaramalai near Karungal. The presiding deity an imposing figure of 14 feet high is the highest image of Krishna in the whole of India.

### **Vivekananda Rock Memorial**

At the Land's end of India, at the last bit of Indian rock and at the confluence of the three oceans stands a majestic monument to Swami Vivekananda. With the construction of this magnificent monument, Kanyakumari has further gained a very important and honoured place in the present day cultural map of India.

The memorial consists of two main structures namely Sripada mandapa around the Sripada and Sabha mandapa otherwise known as Vivekananda mandapa having an eight foot bronze statue of Swami Vivekananda. All the mandapas are in granite. The Sripada mandapa has three prakaras and an "Ekatala Vimana", from the terrace level. within this mandapa is enshrined the holy foot-print. The whole structure is reminiscent of Dravidian style of architecture during the period of the Cholas.

The Mukha mandapa on the entrance to the Sabha mandapa is a combination of Pallava and Ajanta styles of architecture. The Sabha mandapa on the whole looks to be in the style of Cholas. But the vimana of the mandapa is patterned after the Ramakrishna temple at Belur near Calcutta. The floral designs carved on the

ornamental columns of the Sabha mandapa are partly of Pallava style and partly of traditional flavour. The remarkable pieces of artistic genius are the figures of the four deer with a face in common and a bull and elephant with common head. The figures are thus interlocked in a clever composition of a tricky way. No doubt the Vivekananda Rock Memorial, a temple of 20th century stands as a fitting testimony to the traditional architectural genius of India. It is a fine symbol of our cultural heritage.

Kanyakumari District is a holy piece of land containing temples of ancient cultural heritage. One can find there different types of art and architecture. One cannot forget the divine grace of Devi Kanyakumari, the sweet sound produced by the musical pillars of Suchindrum temple, the beauty of wooden panels depicting the story of Ramayana in the Ramaswamy temple at Padmanabhapuram, the exquisite wooden carvings of Udayamarthanda mandapa of Tiruvattar temple, the sparkling waterfalls of Tirupparappu, the religious integration found in the Nagaraja temple at Nagercoil and the Cultural integration spelled by the Padmanabhapuram temples.

Unlike as in other parts of Tamil Nadu, Saivism and Vaishnavism combine together in Kanyakumari District. Every Siva temple is allowed to have a shrine of Vishnu and vice versa. A golden image of Sivalinga is placed near the image of Adikesava at Tiruvattar. The Rishabha mandapa of the Siva temple at Kerala-puram is having the images of Sri Rama and Lakshmana. There is an image of Nataraja in the Perumal Temple at Tiruppathisaram. An image of Kannappa Nayanar, one among the 63 Saivite Nayanmars, is found in the Madhusoothana temple at Parakkai. The race of pilgrims of twelve Sivalayas in Kanyakumari District on the day of Sivarathri uttering the name of Lord Vishnu (Govinda, Gopala) is a rare religious feat which one cannot see anywhere in India. The temples in Kanyakumari District combine together the Tamil and Kerala cultures and also unify Saivism and Vaishnavism, the two main streams of Indian religion. They are thus the symbols of religious and cultural integrations.

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நின்று மேய்ந்து நினைந்து மாகரி  
நீரோ டும் மலர் வேண்டி வான்மழை  
குன்றின் நேர்ந்து குத்திப்பணி  
செய்யும் கோட்டாறு  
—திருக்கோட்டாற்றுப் பதிகம் 43:7—9
3. Panel 6 in the 6th storey of Suchindrum tower.
4. The Suchindrum Temple - Dr. K. K. Pillay, page 11.
5. South Indian Temple Inscriptions, Volume III, Part II, page 6 and Travancore Archaeological Series, Volume I, page 1-14.
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# **The Ramesvaram Temple**

**G. Sethu Raman**

The Rāmeśvaram temple situated 33 miles to the east of Ramnad, is a well known sacred place for the Hindus. It is a place where both the Savites and Vaisnavites take equal part in worshipping the God Sri Rāmanātha and Goddess Sri Parvathavardīni who is popularly known as Malaivalarkāthali. For, the Hindus believe that Lord Siva was worshipped here by Sri Rama, the hero of Rāmāyana and the place was sanctified by the presence of Sri Rāmā and his consort Sita. Rāmeśvaram and Banāras are to the Hindus what Mecca and Jerusalem are to the Muslims and Christians respectively. That has been the hope of millions of Indians through the ages. It has been a strong force of national integration. The saying "Himavat Setupariyantam" conveys this. Hence every Indian cherishes the ambition to complete his pilgrimage to Rāmeśvaram atleast once in his life time.

## **The Origin :**

The origin of the temple may be traced back to a very ancient period. The Epics and Purānas glorify the importance of the temple and the place and connect it with Sri Rama and Sita. It is generally believed that the Ramayana episode belongs to the sixth century B.C.<sup>1</sup> Ahanānūru, a Sangam Work, also speaks of the importance of the place and connects it with Srirāmā,<sup>2</sup> The Tēvāram hymns of Appar and Tirugnana Sambandar (both lived in the 7th century A.D.) also trace the origin of the temple from Sri Rāmā and Sita who are said to have consecrated the Linga at Rāmeśvaram.<sup>3</sup> According to them the temple was a pūṅkōil (surrounded by flowers) during the 7th century A.D.<sup>4</sup> The purānas also speak of the consecration of Liṅga at Rāmeśvaram by Sri Rāmā and his consort Sita. But these purānas widely differ in stating the time and reason for the consecration of the Liṅga. For example, Rāmāyana of Valmiki says that Sri Rāmā worshipped Lord Siva at Sētu, near the Lord's great Ocean, before his march towards Sri Lanka and obtained the Lord's blessings.<sup>5</sup> The Adyātma Rāmāyana<sup>6</sup> and the Siva Purāna<sup>7</sup> also give the same

version. The *Linga purāṇa*<sup>8</sup> and the *Skandapurāṇa*<sup>9</sup> speak of the consecration of *Liṅga* by *Sri Rāmā* in order to get away from the sin that he committed by killing *Rāvana*, the ruler of Ceylon. Nevertheless, the above works uniformly speak of the installation of the *Liṅga* by *Sri Rāmā*.

The *Rāmeśvaram* temple seems to have influenced the origin of a number of other temples in South India with the same name and some of them having the same story of origin. For example, the *Ramesvara* temple at *Quilon* (in *Kerala State*), *Ramalingesvara* temple at *Aryapuram* (*Tanjore Dt., Tamil Nadu*), *Ramanathesvara* temple at *Tiruviramesvaram* (*Tanjore Dt.*), *Ramanathesvara* shrine in the *Vedaranyesvara* temple at *vedaranyam* (*Tanjore Dt.*), *Ramanatha* temple at *Srinivasanallur* (in *Tiruchy Dt., Tamilnadu*) etc. are believed to have been the creations of *Sri Rāmā* and his consort *Sita*. Perhaps these are later works on the model of *Rāmeśvaram* temple. However these temples have no place in the epics and the *Purāṇas*.

### **Structure :**

The *Rāmeśwaram* temple takes its origin to the ancient period. It is evident from the hymns of *Appar* and *Tirugnana Sambandar* that the temple was a thatched shed upto 7th century A.D. The temple as it stands now is definitely not a work of a single ruler or of a single age. It is a work of continuous process starting probably from the 9th century A.D. to that of 16th century A.D. Though the temple stands on a raised ground with its massive structures now, it has been through the ages a victim of geographical and geological disturbances. For example, the island of *Rāmeśvaram* itself was once connected with the mainland in those days. Later on, due to sea erosion it became an island. But it is said that in the 15th century a causeway was constructed by *Sri Krishnama Nayak* of *Madurai*, and damaged subsequently<sup>10</sup> by storms. This *Krishnama Nayak* might not been a ruler of the Kingdom of *Madura* which included *Rāmeśwaram*. Because, the *Nayaks* established their rule in the *Madura* country only in A.D. 1529.<sup>11</sup> The temple had undergone a number of changes, in the name of renovation. Hence it is not possible to fix up the dates constructions accurately. It is surmised from the architectural

designs that most of the structures in the temple reveal the Vijayanagar-Nayak styles. There are also Pre-Vijyanagar structures in the temple. But they are in a dilapidated condition.

The first prakāra of the temple, which consists Rāmanātha and Parvathavardini shrines, is said to have been the work of one Udaiyan Setupati around A.D. 1414.<sup>12</sup> But the Pandya inscriptions of the 12th and 13th centuries, found on the walls of the prakāra, tend to weaken this point. The Mahamaṇḍapa, in the first prakāra is said to be the work of Rāmanātha Pandāram, the manager of the temple, in A.D. 1618.<sup>13</sup> According to an inscription of the same year that Rāmanātha Pandāram repaired the ruined first Prakāra.<sup>14</sup> The Sukravaramandapa, in front of the Parvathavardini shrine, is said to be the work of Vijaya Ragunatha Setupati Katta Tevar (1711-25).<sup>15</sup> But an inscription found on the western side of the maṇḍapa records that it was built by one Periyānayagam Pillai, the manager and ḍharmakārtha of the temple, in A.D.1864.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps he might have repaired the existing maṇḍapa.

The second prakāra is not so complete as in the case of first and third prakāras. This prakāra is said to be the work of Tirumalai Nayak (1627-58) of Madurai.<sup>17</sup> According to another view the southern half of the prakāra was constructed by Tirumalai Setupati (1647-72).<sup>18</sup> His statue and that of his son Ragunatha stand side by side on the southern entrance of the Amman shrine. Tirumalai Setupati might have started the construction at the order from Tirumalai Nayak. Because, the former was a subordinate ruler of the latter who helped him on many a time. Later on, after the death of Tirumalai Nayak in A.D. 1658, the Setupati might have acted on his own accord and erected his statue. Then his son might have erected his own statue near his father's. The Ph. D. thesis, M.K. University), p. 211.

conflict between Chokkanatha, grand son of Tirumalai Nayak and Tirumalai Setupati<sup>19</sup> proved to be a reason for the independent activities of the Setupatis. The renovation work is now on in this prakāra.

The third prakāra is said to be the work of the Setupati rulers. In A.D. 1740 Dalavai Setupati began the third prakāra

setting up the entrances into it from the gōpurams on all four sides and it was completed by Muthu Ramalinga Setupati about A.D. 1770.<sup>20</sup> The statues of Muthu Ramalinga Setupati and his two ministers Muthirulappa Pillai and Krishna Iyengar are found in the western and eastern sides of the prakāra. The Sabhapati shrine situated in the north eastern corner of the prakāra is said to be the work of Dalavay Setupati in A.D. 1702.<sup>21</sup> But neither the reigning period of Dalavay Setupati (c.A.D. 1635-36) nor that of his son Tirumalai Ragunatha Setupati (c.A.D. 1647-72) tallys with this date.

The Setumadava shrine<sup>72</sup> enshrined within the third prakāra is attributed to one Pandya ruler Punyanidhi according to the Skandapurāna <sup>23</sup>. The Skandapurāna connects it with a dream of the said Pandya ruler. This king was very pious. He started on a pilgrimage to sētu and on his way rested in Gandhamadhana Parvatha (a small sand hillock near the temple), also called Rāmarpātham. After worshipping Lord Ramanatha he performed a yāga to please Lord Viṣṇu. To test his devotion Lord Viṣṇu sent Lakṣmī in the form of an orphan. The king who had no daughters took pity on her and treated her as his own daughter.

One day a Brahmin sage appeared at the place and after seeing the princess, caught her by the hand, for he was struck with love. She cried aloud and apprised the matter to the king. The Brahmin sage was put in chains and confined in the vicinity of Lord Rāmanātha. In the night the king dreamt that the Brahmin was in reality Lord Viṣṇu with his foster daughter by his side as Lakṣmī. He woke up and found the dream real. He begged their pardon. They were pleased with his devotion and Viṣṇu said that the chains were in reality the emblems of the chain of the love and devotion and further said that Lord Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī would stay in the same place in the name of Sētu Madhava. The Lord again ordained that one who takes bath in the Setu Madhava tīrthā, near by, worships him and Lakṣmī will be blessed with all the fruits of a holy bath in Setu. Thus the Rāmeśvaram temple became a great pilgrim centre for the Vaisnavites also. But the royal title and the chronological data of the said Pandya ruler Punyanidhi is shrouded in mystery.

### Architectural style :

The Ramesvaram temple stands on a raised ground. It is a massive structure with magnificent prakāras and a number of shrines. The temple is enclosed by a 20 feet high compound wall which surrounds an area of 13.6 acres of land. The compound wall measures about 259.50 metres from east to west and 197.10 metres from north to south. It has five gateways, two on the east and the remaining on the other three directions. All the three prakāras encircle a number of shrines, maṇḍapās and tīrthās. The maṇḍapas are strengthened by a number of Vijayanagar-Nayak pillars. These pillars are decorative and sculptured ones. No yālī type and musical pillars are found in the temple. The second prakāra is a living example of the Vijayanagar-Nayak style. Because this part of the temple alone is maintaining its past architectural features. Even this, in due course may lose its natural charm due to renovation work which is on. The world famous third prakāra is with 17 feet breadth running all round between huge colonnades on flat forms five feet high. This prakāra is also called Sokkattanmandapa as it looks like 'sokkattan' (dice) in shape.

The temple has two huge gōpurās (towers) on the east and the west. The eastern main gōpurā is a nine storeyed one while the west one is a five storeyed gōpurā. The western gōpurā is an old one. The eastern gōpurā, is a work of the present century. However, the foundation of this gōpurā along with that of the gateways in the south and in the north is an early work. The towers over the foundations of the southern and the northern gōpurās still remain in dreams.

The temple lodges a number of sculptures. Saivite and Vaisnavite sculptures find an equal footing in the temple. Many of them tally with the cononic principles while the others do not tally. The painting is found scatteredly in various parts of the temple. But they are all very modern.

The temple also lodges a number of figures of Setupati rulers. These figures are mostly found one pillar just as the Nayak figures found on the pillars of the Pudumandapa.



in front of the Sri Meenakchi Sundaresvara temple Madurai. These Setupati figures are shown with long moustaches and big bellies. Some of them are shown with traditional dhotis on the hip and wearing turbans and ornaments. Others are depicted with modern dress such as pants and suits, evidently modern figures. All these setupatis are unanimously depicted with folding hands in anjalibhandha.

### **The tirthas :**

The island of Rāmeśvaram has about 40 tīrthās in it; 22 of which are inside the temple.<sup>24</sup> The temple is noted for its flourishing tīrthās. No temple in the Indian subcontinent has such a vast number of tirthas with its precincts. The taste of the water of the 22 tīrthās in the temple actually differs from each other, though these are very near to the sea. While the sea water and water in and around the island of Rāmeśvaram is salty, the tīrthās inside the temple are very sweet to drink. The wells of these tīrthās have come to be dug in various shapes such as square, rectangular, polygonal, octogonal and circular. Rectangular, octogonal and circular are achitectural forms connected with the traditional Hindu styles of art like Nagara, Dravida and Vesara respectively.<sup>25</sup> However, the association of these forms to the shapes of the wells of the tīrthās cannot be ascertained and refuted totally. The sancitivity of the place with its twenty two tīrthās has been recognised from the earliest times by all sections of Hindu religion and by the epics and purānas. Both Skandapurāna and Sētopurāna give an elaborate description of each of the tīrthās in the Rāmeśvaram temple. They highlight the examples and stories in order to glorify the importance of taking bath in the tīrthās. The stories are found to have been mostly connected with the characters of the epics. Though they contain unimaginable and exaggerated versions, one cannot set them aside as mere fictions and fallacies.

The Skandapurāna says that all the holy Gods and Goddesses and all the holy waters love to live on Mount Gandhamadana<sup>26</sup> The Ananda Ramayana speaks about the subsequent pilgrimages of Śri Rāmā to Rāmeśvaram and his bathing at Bhairavatīrthā, Lakshmana kunda, Agnitīrthā, Jatātīrthā and Kōtītīrthā.<sup>27</sup> The

Adhyatma Ramayana speaks that "one who bows to the Sētubandha and sees Siva, Rāmeśvara with due vow and observance or who goes to Banaras brings water from the Ganges and bathes Rāmeśvara with the same, will have his weight of sin thrown in the sea and will attain salvation without doubt."<sup>28</sup> The Matsya Purana glorifies the importance of the Kōtitīrthā, According to it one who perambulates Kōtitīrthā becomes a most flourishing king and one who dies there goes to the region of Rudra and is born as a king in his next life after which he goes to heaven.<sup>29</sup> According to the Sētopurāna and the Skandapurāna one has to take bath in this tīrthā, only after bathing in all the other tīrthās for freedom from any residual sin.<sup>30</sup> It is believed that Sri Krishna freed himself from the sin of killing his maternal uncle, Kamsa, by bathing in this tīrthā.<sup>31</sup> Sētopurāna says that the Kōti tīrthā gives all kinds of pleasures which are not given by other tīrthās.<sup>32</sup> Even today, pilgrims who believe that taking bath in the Kōti tīrthā alone is sufficient for securing all sorts of blessings of God.

Agnitīrthā, the most important one, is in reality the Bay of Bengal, directly opposite to the eastern main tower of the temple. It derived this name because it was here that Sri Rāmā tested the chastity of Sita after her return from the custody of Rāvanā. This tīrthā sprang up in the place where the God of fire (Agni) brought Śita from the funeral pyre to Sri Rāmā testifying to her chastity and purity.<sup>33</sup> It is believed that with the help of this tīrthā, Sutēekshana, a disciple of Sage Agastya freed a young merchant from a curse of a sage whose son he had drowned in a pond.<sup>34</sup> Even to-day people from all over India and abroad flock at this place and take bath in this tīrthā. Parents who do not have children also believe that a bath at this place will give the potentiality of giving birth to a child. Dhanuskōti, a suburb of Rāmesvaram, is a very important tīrthasthala. But at present it has lost its importance due to sea erosion.<sup>35</sup> It is the confluence of the two seas-the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean. Tradition says that a bath at this point will give the fruits of ability, prosperity, fame, knowledge and wisdom, freedom from desire and purity of mind. The Padma purāna and the Naradīyapurāna speak of the glory of Dhanuskoti and the importance of bathing in that place.<sup>36</sup> The place is connected with the story of the

Rāmāyana and the origin of the Rāmeśvaram temple. Thus, every tīrthā inside the Rāmeśvaram temple and outside it has a story of separate uniqueness.

### **Patronage :**

The temple was patronised by the Cōlas, the later Pandyas, the Hoysalas, the Vijayanagar rulers, the Nayaks, the Setupatis and the rulers of Travancore and Pudukkottai. These rulers showed their patronage by way of adding the structures, granting villages and lands, by performing tulābhāra ceremony and paying homage to God Rāmanātha and his consort Parvadhavardīni Amman. A copper plate inscription found at Velanjeri,<sup>37</sup> dated in A.D. 930 records that Parantaka cōla I performed the tulābhāra before God Rāmanātha of Rāmeśvaram<sup>38</sup>. It is believed that Krishna III, a contemporary Rashtrakuta ruler of Parantaka Cōla I, had built two more temples at Rāmeśvaram<sup>39</sup>. But Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri questions the authenticity of this information<sup>40</sup>. The Hoysala ruler Narasimha II's dandanayaks, Bhogaya and Mallaya, made gifts of villages to Brahmins in the presence of God Rāmanātha at Rāmeśvaram in A.D. 1237<sup>41</sup>. The struggle for power in the south between Raja Raja III, the Cōla ruler and Maravarman Sundara Pandya I was settled by Narasimha through dynastic marriages. He succeeded in securing real dominance over the South and his power was felt upto Rāmeśvaram.<sup>42</sup>

We do not have any reliable source on the association of the early Pandyas with Rāmeśvaram. But later Pandya inscriptions are found in the temple. An inscription found on the west wall of the Chidambaresvara shrine in the Rāmeśvaram temple records a grant of certain measure of ghee for the performance of pūja in the temple by one Vīra Pandya<sup>43</sup>. But the last portions of the inscriptions are damaged and the date is not mentioned. According to the Pandya Kulodhayam a Pandya ruler Vīra Pandya ascended the throne in A.D. 1170<sup>44</sup>. Between A.D. 1169 and A.D. 1189 Rāmeśvaram was under the control of the Ceylonese King<sup>45</sup>. One Vīra Pandya showed his allegiance to the Ceylonese rulers and there by incurred the displeasure of the Cōlas. Hence this Vīra Pandya of accession A.D. 1170 must be the donor of ghee to the temple

when the Ceylonese had their control over it. Another Pandya record found at the left side of the entrance into the Rāmanātha shrine refers to one Tribhuvanachakravartin Sundara Pandya Deva. The record dates his eleventh regnal year.<sup>46</sup> Since the inscription is in a damaged condition it is not possible to ascertain the nature of the association of the king with the temple. This king may be identified with Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I whose accession date is A.D. 1251.<sup>47</sup> Maravarman Sri Vallabha Pandya who had ruled a part of Pandya country in A.D. 1404-1439 said to have covered the Rāmeśvaram temple tower with copper sheets<sup>48</sup>.

The Vijayanagar epoch opened a flourishing period for most of the temples of South India including Rāmeśvaram. It is noted that the performance of pūja in various temples in Tamil Nadu was either obstructed or prevented during the muslim expedition. Ramesvaram was not an exception to it. In A.D. 1371, Kumara Kampa, who invaded the Madura Country, restored the performance of pūja in the temples. He had a holy bath at Rāmeśvaram and made gifts to the temple.<sup>49</sup> Vira Narasimha, (1505-09) the half brother of Krishnadeva Raya, is said to have made extraordinary gifts at Venkatadri, Chidambaram, Rāmeśvaram and other holy places.<sup>50</sup> Krishnadeva Raya (c A.D. 1509-1531) visited the Rāmeśvaram Temple in A.D. 1513 washed his bloody sword, performed the sētusnanam and tulābhāra ceremony and presented the God with numerous gold.<sup>51</sup> When the Vijayanagar power had gradually declined in the Tamil Country, the Portuguese gained authority over the coastal regions. They hoisted their flag on the towers of Rāmeśvaram. However, the Portuguese were driven away from there within a short span of time, by the timely action of the Saivaite saint Thayumanavar<sup>52</sup>.

The Nayak rulers of Tamil Nadu and the setupatis of Ramnad had made large endowments and grants to the temple. The Nayaks of Madura patronised, repaired and made new additions of structures and valuable grants to the temple. The Nayaks of Tanjavur also extended their patronage. In A.D. 1582 two Veli measures of land was granted to the temple for the merit of Visvanatha Nayak (1529-64), the founder of the Madura Nayakdom<sup>53</sup>. According to some inscriptions found in the temple, during the Nayak rule, one Ramanatha Pandaram is

said to have constructed the Kōtitīrthā Maṇḍapa and repaired the first prakāra<sup>54</sup>. Tirumalai Nayak (c. 1623-1659) of Madura is said to have regularised the pūja worship in the Rāmeśvaram temple and made an agreement with the priests of temple in this regard<sup>55</sup>.

Ever since the re-establishment of the Ramnad Kingdom in A.D. 1604, the Setupati rulers had been calling themselves 'the Lords of the causway to Rāmeśvaram'. They also protected the pilgrims going to Rāmeśvaram, granted many villages to the temple and worshipped the deity therein as their own family God. Sadaika Tevan Udaiyan Setupati (c.A.D. 1605-22) the founder Setupati ruler maintained an efficient police force for the pilgrims and gifted five villages to the temple in A.D. 1607.<sup>56</sup> His son Dalavay Setupati endowed Maruthanganallur Village for conducting pūjas to God Rāmānatha, for pasting Kavi and for the presentation of sandalpaste, yellowpaste and sacred lamp to Goddess Parvathavardini,<sup>57</sup> Tirumalai Ragunatha Setupati granted few lands to Sankaragurukkal and his companions in A.D. 1658, for the conduct of Navaratri festival.<sup>58</sup> Tirumalai Setupati is said to have completed the southern part of the second prakāra which had been started during Tirumalai Nayak's period. The statues of Tirumalai Setupati and that of his son Ragunatha are found by the side of the South entrance into the Amman Shrine. In A.D. 1678 Ragunatha Setupati alias kilavan Setupati granted Tiyanur Village to the temple for conducting ceremonies.<sup>59</sup> Vijaya Ragunatha Setupati granted some lands for the maintenance of feeding house inside the temple around A.D. 1713.<sup>60</sup> He frequented Rāmeśvaram and carefully looked after the comforts and safety of the pilgrims to Rāmeśvaram.<sup>61</sup> Muthu Ramalinga Vijaya Ragunatha Setupati endowed lands for the feeding of the people and provided a watershed for the pilgrims at Rāmeśvaram in A.D. 1770.<sup>62</sup> In A.D. 1863, Periyannayagam Pillai, a Minister in the Setupatis court, repaired and decorated the dhvajasthamba in front of the Amman shrine.<sup>63</sup> In the years that followed the Setupatis lost much of their power. However, they continued their service to the temple.

From the establishment of the Setupatis they themselves took care of the administration of the temple. Though there

were some misunderstanding between Setupatis, the hereditary managers of the temple and the Pandarams, the direct executives of the temple, both of them never failed to see that the pūjas and festivals in the temple were not affected. They claimed their authorities over the temple administration and pleaded the court of law for judgement. The Setupatis were again restored as the hereditary managers.<sup>64</sup> Till the present century a male member from the Setupati family was allowed to head the Board of Trustees, which administered the temple affairs. Recently in 1980's the Setupati family lost its membership in the trust board. Because the last Setupati, Ragunatha Setupati had no male issues. Though the Rāmeśvaram temple has a chequered history of more than two hundred years, it was only under the Vijayanagar, Nayak and Ramnad rulers it reached its completion.

### **Rituals :**

The Rāmeśvaram temple rituals are performed six times a day. These rituals are based on the āgamic principles. The Pūjas consists of a number of stages such as āvāhana (the evocation of the deity), āsana (presenting Him a seat), Svagata (asking water for washing his feet), arghya (presenting water to Him in which flowers, saffron and sandalwood powder have been placed, āchamanam (offering water expecting Him to wash His mouth and face), madhuparka (offering a beverage composed of honey, sugar and milk), snana-jala (water for His bath), bhooshan-abharanasya (offering cloths, jewels and ornaments) gandha (pasting sandalwood powder), akashatās (rice grains mixed with saffron) puspā (offering of flowers), dhūpa (incence), dīpa (a lighted lamp) and neivēdya offering cooked rice, fruits, payasam and other etables and betels which constitute the meal to a single person. In those days the parayana of Gita and dance performances in the temple festivals have been celebrated periodically on specific occasions. The festivals attract both Saivites and Vaishnavites. The people from North India come over here during the festival days. It serves the double purposes. They are able to worship the God as well as witness the festivals. During the festivals the island become an attractive business centre. Among the festivals

the most significant is the Ramalinga Pradhistā festival, celebrated during the Tamil Month Āni (June-July). This festival is celebrated in remembrance of the pradhistā of Śiva Liṅga by Sri Rāmā and his consort Sita.

The historical analysis of the Rāmeśvaram Temple indicates that the temple reached its high mark during the Vijayanagar, Nayak and Setupati rulers. The references to the temple in bakti literature indicate its antiquity. Its most architectural pieces are the representatives of the Vijayanagar style. As a centre of a social conglomeration, regardless of any geo-centric feeling, the extensive layout of the temple from the utilitarian point of view stands vindicated. This temple itself in its totality is a good specimen for study in Dravidian Architecture.

### NOTES & REFERENCES

1. It is a controversy among the Scholars. But it is believed that the Aryans migrated into the Tamil Country during the 6th century B.C. The Rāmāyana episode may belong to this initial stage.
2. Ahanānūru, v. 70.
3. Tēvāram, Rāmeśvaram Pathigams, in III & IV Tirumurais.
4. Tēvāram, Ibid.
5. Valmiki's Rāmāyana, Yuddhakanda, canto. 126, vv. 20-21.
6. Adyātma Rāmāyana, Yuddhakanda.
7. Śiva Purāna, III, ch. 42, vv. 46-7.
8. Linga Purāna, II, ch. 11, v. 38.
9. Skanda Purāna, Sētumahatmyakanda, canto. 43.
10. N. Vanamamalai Pillai, The Setu and Rameswaram, Madras 1929, p. 32.
11. R. Sathyanatha Aiyer, History of the Nayaks of Madura, Madras, 1980. p. 34.
12. Indian Antiquary, (I.A), XII, 1883, pp. 315-26.

13. S.S.I., VIII, No. 388 A.R.E., 1903, No. 103.
14. Burgess and Natesa Sastri, Tamil and Sanskrit Inscriptions, No. 7, pp. 56-7.
15. V. Rangachari, A Topographical List of the Inscriptions of the Madras Presidency (collected till 1915), Madras, 1919, Setupati Copper plate Inscriptions, No.13. and I.A., XII, pp. 315-26.
16. Burgess and Natesa Sastri, op. cit., pp. 56-7(Setupathi, Inscriptions, No. 21).
17. Annual Report of Archeological Survey of Southern India, Southern Circle, for 1910-11, pp. 52-54.
18. K. Seshadri, "The Setupatis of Ramnad", (unpublised Ph. D. Thesis, M. K. University) P. 211.
19. Father J. Bertrand, La Mission du Madure, III, Letter No. 3.
20. I.A., XII, 1883, pp. 315-26. & also A.R. of A.S. of India Southern Circle-1910-11, pp. 52-54.
21. Fergusson, India and Eastern Architecture, pp. 335-58, also I.A., XII, 1883, pp. 315-26.
22. The Ananda Rāmāyana calls the God of this shrine as Svēta Mādhava. (Ananda Rāmāyana, Yatrakanda, canto IX, V. 28).
23. Skandapurāna, Sētumahātmyakanda.
24. The Tirthās outside the temple are Kapitīrthā and Bhairavatīrthā in Pamban, Villuni and Sitakunda tirthās near Thankachimāṇḍam, Ranavimōchanatīrthā, panchapandava tīrthā, Mangalatīrthā and Amirtavapi near Ekāṇḍa Rāmeswaram, Jataitīrthī and Dhanuskoti. Rāmatīrthā and Lakshmanatīrthā with in a mile from the temple.
25. Raju Kalidos, 'Teppakkulams of Tamilnadu', proceedings of the South Indian History Congress, Madurai, 1981' p. 208 fn.
26. Skandapurāna, Canto. 43 ( Sētumahatmyakanda ).
27. Ananda Rāmāyana, Canto 9, v. 28.
28. Adhyatma Rāmāyana, Yuddhakanda.
29. Matsya Purāna, ch. 191, vv. 7-13.



30. Sētopurāna, Kōtitirthā Sarukkam, vv. 70-79 & Skandapurāna. Sētumahatmakanda.
31. Sētopurāna, Kōtitirtha Sarukkam, vv. 81-82.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid, Agni tīrthā Sarukkam, vv. 12-13.
34. Ibid., vv. 102-103 and Skandapurāna, Sētumahatmyakanad,
35. Dhanuskoti and Dhanuskoti pierstations have been completely destroyed by the cyclone of December 1964 which engulfed and destroyed them.
36. Padmapurāna, Uttarakanda, ch. 35 and Naradīyapurāna, Uttarakanda, ch. 76.
37. R. Nagasamy, Ed., Tiruttani and Velanjeri Copper Plates ( Dept. of Archeaology, Govt. of Tamilnadu, 1979 ), p.2. Velanjeri is near Tiruttani in the North Arcot District.
38. Tulābhāra is a ceremony by weighing gold against a person or king in front of the God and presenting the same to the God.
39. R. Nagasamy, Ramanathapuram (Madras, 1978), p. 8.
40. K.A.N. Sastri, The Cōlas, p. 132.
41. A.R.E., 1938, No. 14.
42. K. R. Venkataraman, Hoysalas in the Tamil Country, ( Annamalainagar, 1950 ), p. 15.
43. A R.E., 1903, No. 104.
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46. K.A.N. Sastri, The Pandya Kingdom, pp. 150-52.
47. His inscription at Tiruvenkadu Calls him as Jatavarman Tribhuvanachakravarthin Ellarkkunayenar Sundara Pandya Deva ( A. R. E. 1920, No. 531 & 1931, p. 91). Another Pandya Ruler Jatavarman Sundara Pandya III also had the title Tribhuvanachakravarthi but most of his inscriptions call him Tribhuvanachakravarthi Konerinmai Kondan with a surname Kodandaraman.

48. A. R. E., 1909, p. 72.
49. A.R.E., 1903, Nos. 106 & 111.
50. Epigraphia Indica, XIV, pp. 231-40.
51. Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam Epigraphical Report, p. 179, fn.
52. C. S. Navarathanam, A short History of Hinduism in Ceylon and three Essays on the Tamils (Jaffna, 1964, p. 48).
53. A. R. E., 1903, No. 97.
54. Ibid., No. 99. & No. 100.
55. Ibid., 1946, No. 24.
56. Archaeological Survey of Southern India, Report, IV, p. 68.
57. A.R.E., 1946-47, No. 26.
58. Burgess and Natesa Sastri, Tamil and Sanskrit Inscriptions, pp. 72-4.
59. Ibid., pp. 79-80.
60. A.R E., 1946-47, No. 32.
61. Raja Ram Rao, Ramnad Manual, p. 236.
62. A.R.E., 1911, No: 7, Appendix. A.
63. Burgess & Natesa Sastri, op. cit., pp. 57-60.

# **The Art and Architecture of the Temple at Tirunallam**

**R. Jayalakshmi**

## **Introduction**

During the reign of the Imperial cōlās, the Tañcāvūr district has been studded with innumerable temples. Between the period of Parāntakā I and Rājaraja the Great, a new type of architecture had become the fashion of the day. The temples built by Cempiyan Mātēvi (wife of Kaṇṭarātitta). the period of uttama Cōlā can be cited as an excellent example for this type of architecture. Among these temples, Thirunallam Umamakēswara shrine is considered as an important specimen of this type of architecture.

## **Topography of the village**

Thirunallam is the old name of the modern Kōnērīrācapuram. There is a village called C. Putūr in the highway from Kumbakonam to Karaikkal. Thirunallam is situated in between the C. Putur and Vaṭamaṭṭam of Tañcāvūr district. In otherwords, this village has been placed 21 Kms. distance from Kumbakōnam in the south-eastern direction.

## **Significance of the Village**

This village, surrounded by fertile lands, has been known as one of the important centres for the vedic scholars. This ancient village has been surrounded by a number of places with religious importance like Nākambādi, Anniyūr, Vayalūr, Nallāvūr, Tiruvilimilalai, etc., of puranic fame.

## **Observations About the Temple**

The temple and the tank are on the eastern side of the bus stop of Kōnērīrācapuram. In the 7th Century. A.D. St. Gnāṇacam-pantar sanctified this temple with his hymns. Appar praised the Lord of the temple as Nallattān. He says, "Nallattan is the Lord, who has given us the privilege of a devotee! Please chant His glories! At once your miseries will disappear!"<sup>1</sup> In another verse, he expresses that "He is the Lord of Umātēvi, who dwells in this village. Hence it is good for us to worship Him."<sup>2</sup> In the same sense, he had composed several verses in praise of Siva, the presiding deity of this temple.<sup>3</sup>

From these references of St. Campantar and St. Appar, it seems that the temple might have become popular even before the days of these saints. But we know from the inscriptions that in the present structure of the temple, the Sanctum Sanctorum and the artha maṇṭapā have been constructed by Cempiyan Mātevi in the 10th century, and the additions of this temple have been built by the later rulers of the cōḷā dynasty.

### **Structure of the temple.**

Though this shrine appears to be a small one in its form, facing westwards, it is not only an ancient temple but also is one of the temples that have been well maintained by the authorities. In the precincts on the southern side of the Rajagopuram, the shrine of Lord Ganesa extends a warm welcome to the devotees. On the northern side of the presiding deity, a small temple of Murukā can be noticed. In the northern side, the temple for Cakti adds its grandeur to this temple complex.

In between the inner verandah and the tower of the temple opposite to the sanctum sanctorum, the hall for the vākaṇās stands in a majestic form. After crossing that hall, one can enter into the gates under the smaller tower which leads to the precincts of the presiding deity. There is an entrance-hall (Muka Maṇṭapā), which serves as an inner verandah. Then there is the Artha Maṇṭapa. After crossing these structures, we can reach the sanctum sanctorum. At the two sides of the gate of the presiding deity, there are two imposing statues of the two gate keepers (Tuvārapālakās).

### **Sanctum Sanctorum**

The sanctum sanctorum is 6.10 Sq. m. in size. The length of the Arta maṇṭapa is 6.10 mtr. and the entrance hall is 10.3 mtr. in length. This is perhaps the Pukaḷāparaṇa Maṇṭapā referred to in one of Kulottunga III's inscriptions.<sup>4</sup>

The Vimāṇā, towering over this shrine is of the Vēcarā, type. The lower portion of the external side of the shrine contains various parts, such as Upanam, Kumutam, Paṭṭikai, Kaṇṭam, Kampu, Pitti and Kapōtam.

This shrine is facing westwards. So there are small shrines on three other sides of the walls of the temple. In the temples of earlier Cōlās, only a cluster of three or five figures can be seen on three sides of the wall. But in this temple, a cluster of nine, shrines are sculptured on the three sides. This is a significant feature of Cempiyan Mātēvi's style of architecture.

### **Surface of the Northern Wall**

In one of the northern clusters of the shrine, the Goddess Durga with eight hands, crushing the demon Makisa, has been portrayed. On the two sides of this figure two bar-reliefs of the sculptures are engraved. The figure at the left side seated in the posture of severing its own head and the figure at the right side seated in the posture of cutting its thigh to present them as offerings to Durga. This kind of sculptural motif can be witnessed in most of the temples erected by the queen cempiyan Mātēvi.

On the left side of Durga, there is the sculptural panel of Artanāriesvarā and on the right the statue of Kaṅkālamūrti. A sculpture of dwarf-demon can be seen in the near side of the Kaṅkāla Mūrti. Adjacent to this sculpture, the figures of Pramma can be noticed.

### **Eastern Niche**

In the niche on the eastern side of the wall, the image of Liṅkōtpava catches our attention. Under the feet of Siva, the figure of a pig makes strenuous efforts to search for and find out the feet of the Lord. On the top of the Liṅka the figure of a swan finds a prominent place. Besides these the animal and the bird, the portrat sculptures of Tirumal on the left and Prammā on the right and found in the worshipping posture. In all other temples, only the swan and the pig can be seen in the sculptures of Liṅkōt pava. But in the Tirunallam temple, the two divine images have been added to this sculpture, which clearly tells the puranic mythology. This is another significant feature of this temple. This has been acclaimed as another sculptural motif adopted by the queen Cempiyan Mātēvi.

Lord Siva of this sculpture has four arms. Each one of the arms holds a weapon like an axe in one hand, a deer in another, the third in the pose of affording protection and the fourth hanging down in the Uru mudra. He wears the belt (utarapanta), garland of sacred beads, bracelets and the crown of matted-locks. Pramma appears with his three faces and four hands. Two of his hands (the hands in back side) holds the garland of beads and a vessel known as Kamaṇḍalam. In the other two (front side hands) the left arm is paying homage to Siva. In the same manner Vishnu has the caṅku and chakkaram in his backside hands and the front right hand pays homage to Siva.

### **Southern Niches**

In the four niches on the Southern side, the sculptures of Taṭcāṇāmūrti, Naṭarācā, Akattiyar and Vināyakar adorn the wall.

The niches containing Lord Naṭarācā arrest our attention. The fascinating image of the Lord, the exquisite figures of the dancing Kālī and Kūli the beating of drum by Nanti on the side of Naṭarācā express the classical excellence of the Cōḷā Art. Besides these, the charming slender figure of Umā, who graces the occasion with amazement, has been portrayed on the left side of niche. This sculpture of Umā bears ample testimony to the ideal of womanhood as conceived by the Tamils, in the days of imperial cōḷās. This sculpture resembles the early Pandyan sculpture at Tirupparaṅkuṇṇam.<sup>5</sup>

The top of these niches have been ornamented with the Makara festoon (Makara Tōraṇā), on a grand scale. In the midst of these festoons and in the lower parts, the puranic episodes of Vāli performing worship to Siva and killing of Elephant by Siva are shown in miniature forms.

### **The Sculpture of Kaṇṭarātītā**

The bas-relief sculpture of the Cōḷā king Kaṇṭarātītā is found in the southern wall of the temple, next to the niche of Taṭcāṇāmūrti. A small sculpture depicts the Civa Liṅka.

Another figure represents a priest who adorns, the Liṅkā with a piece of cloth. Opposite to this scene, there is a figure seated with folded hands. Behind that figure, one person holds the umbrella and another person waves the veṅcāmaram.

Below this relief — sculpture, an inscription in Tamil can be easily noticed. The inscription states: “Hail Prosperity! This temple has been erected by Mātēvaṭi Kal Sri Cempiyan Mātēviyār, wife of Sri Kaṇṭarātita in the reign of uttama Cōḷā. She has raised a temple out of granite for Thirunalla muṭaiyar, which is called by the name of her beloved husband. In this temple, she has made arrangements to depict this sculpture in the posture of Kaṇṭaratitta worshipping the feet of the Lord of Tirunallam”<sup>6</sup>

From the inscription, it appears that this temple was erected by Cempiyan Mātēvi. Hence, the figure worshipping the Civaliṅka represents Kaṇṭarātittā without any doubt. The temple was built in the reign of Uttama Cōḷa the only son of Cempiyan Mātēvi and Kaṇṭarātittā. These informations are conveyed by this inscription. So, it can be perceived that this temple construction has been considered as an important one in the history and architecture of the Cōḷās.

### **Misrepresentation of the fact**

Some scholars like Sethuraman have misinterpreted this sculpture. Thiru Sethuraman thinks that the devotee worshipping the Liṅkā in the sculpture is the queen Cempiyan Mātēvi. He says that there are some flowers in the head-dress of the figure and there are bangles in the hands which can be easily seen. So this figure represents the queen, and the figure which adorns the Linka with a cloth should be the king. Hence, Kaṇṭarātittā seems to have lived as an ascetic after the erection of this temple in 974 A.D.<sup>7</sup>

First we must not forget that the inscription itself states that Kaṇṭaratitta Cōḷa worships Lord Siva. But it did not say that the person (most probably the priest) who adorns the deity with a cloth is Kaṇṭarātitta. Though he may have been the emperor, he would not have been allowed to touch the idol. So, that figure must be a representation of a priest who must have performed the

daily worship. The seated figure with the folded hands is represented with the royal paraphernalia in the back round. If we keenly observe the whole sculpture, then it will reveal that the seated figure should be the king.

We should not forget that in olden days, men also used to adorn their tuft with flowers and bracelets in their wrists.

We understand from the inscription that Cempiyan Mātāvi must have erected this temple to perpetuate the memory of her husband. So, it would be improper for one to infer that Kaṇṭarāttita was alive at that time. Besides this, if the figure is the representation of the queen, the inscription would have mentioned her name there. In the light of the above facts we can state that it is the seated devotee that should be the King Kaṇṭarātittā.

#### **Sculpture of Haracaraṇa**

There is a dwarf-figure under the sculpture of Akattiyar. The inscription under this figure clearly states that this is the figure of the officer who was in charge of supervising the construction of the temple. He was called as Cāttaṇ Kuṇa Pattiran Haracaraṇa Cēkaraṇ of Ālattūr.<sup>8</sup>

#### **The first Arcade**

In the first arcade of the temple, right to the sanctum sanctorum the shrine of Caṇṭēcuvāra, gives delight to the devotees.

This shrine was built by Tittai Viḷumiyāṇ in the 15th regnal year of Kulothuḷka I.

On the western side of the wall of this temple, the figures of Caṇṭēcuvāra and this chief have been depicted, worshipping the Lord. The standing figure in this sculpture has been identified with this chief and the seated figure with Caṇṭēcuvāra. On the upper side of Caṇṭēcuvāra and the right side of Tittai Viḷumiyāṇ there are two inscriptions that make specific reference to their names and tell that they are worshipping the Lord.<sup>9</sup>

In this arcade, the icons of Sivaliṅkā, Caṇṭīsvarā and pairavā are placed in the back side of the main shrine. In the front side,



the images of four Saivite Saints, Vinayaka in various poses, Siva, Muruka and Lakshmi are arranged in their usual places.

In the northern side of this first arcade, the bronze images of the deities are kept in a chamber.

### **Cola Bronzes**

The Kōṇērīrācapuram Civa temple is well known for its rich treasures of Cōḷā bronzes. Among them the icon of Naṭarācā, has been acclaimed as the best specimen of the bronzes of the Imperial Cōḷās. The image of dancing Civa in this temple is considered as the biggest among the images of Naṭarācā, so far discovered in the world. It has been said that this icon is superior in its classical grandeur and in its excellence of workmanship than any other icon of Naṭarācā, including the Civapuram icon which has been smuggled to the U. S. A. about two decades ago.

Besides this Naṭarācā, there are a number of icons, such as Civakāmasuntari Kalyaṇa cuntarar, Tirumāl, Tiripurāntakar and Pokēswari which reveal the high watermark reached in the artistic attainments of the Cōḷa artisans.

### **Paintings in the temple**

We cannot trace any paintings of the Cōḷa period in this temple. But there are some significant paintings in the vākana maṇṭapa. On the inner side of the roof, in the pillars and in the right and left wall of this maṇṭapa there are a number of paintings of the modern age. On the southern side of the second gate, there are colourful and fascinating paintings, which depict the important incidents in the life the Saivite Saint Somāci Māra, Cēkkiḷar has given graphic account about this saint in his Periyapurāna.

Adjacent to this hall, the love episode of Mānaka and Visvāmitra and the birth of Cakuntala are exquisitely portrayed.

Another interesting painting arrests our attention in this panel. In this painting, the artist has made an attempt to depict

the worship of Civa Linkā by foreigners (probably Britishers). On the other side of the Civa-Linka, a group of dancing girls (Taḷicceri Peṇṭir) are painted in the mode of worshipping the deity. At a distance some musicians are shown playing on their instruments. Besides these, the picture of Tamayanti as she sends the swan as a messenger to Nalā, an unidentified Episode of a Hunter and a lady have also been painted in the same wall. Then a picture of a musician who appears to be in deep meditation has been painted in a graceful manner. This saint musician may be identified with Tiṃākayyā.

On the two sides of the pillars, the figures of Vinayakā, Muruka, a figure riding an animal (which could not be easily identified), a cow that pours its milk on a Liṅkā under a tree, the four Saiva saints and some fauna and flora are depicted on a grand scale.

The upper panel of this hall, has been divided into three parts. On the left and right sides of the panel the Annual temple festival for ten days has been vividly portrayed. The temple car (Tēr) festival has been painted in great detail. The groups of devotees chanting the vēdās, singing the Tirumurais and other devotional songs are graphically painted in this part of the panel

In the middle part of the panel, the taricanam of Civa to the sages and devotees is represented in classical style. The picture that depicts the sage Cukar preaching holy mantrās to other sages deserves special mention here. Various types of penance performed by the sages and the four vedas in their iconography (Rik-with four faces in yellow colour, yajur-with four faces in white colour, Sāmā-with three faces in brown colour and Atarvan-with two faces in blue colour) are painted with artistic insight.

On the whole, though the paintings in this temple belong to the Modern Age, the artists appear to have followed the traditional traits of painting and in some cases, they have blended the Cōlā art motifs with the Vijayanagara style of paintings.

### **Gopura or the Entrance Tower**

In the first entrance to this temple, there is a tower. The name of the philanthropist, who had erected this tower is shown as Sri Ramappillai alias Mutalippillai of Vaṅkippurā.

## **Inscriptions**

There are a number of inscriptions in this temple which shed sumptuous light on the donors, who have contributed liberally to this temple for daily worship as well as for the annual festivals.

## **Conclusion**

From a brief study of the art and architecture of the temple we can come to the following conclusions:

1. The Civā temple at Kōnērīrācapuram bears ample testimony to the religious fervour of the Cōla queen cempianyan Matēvi, who appears to have led the life of a widow for a long time.

2. The architectural style of this temple serves as a connecting link between the Parantaka and Rajaraja styles of temple architecture.

3. The sculptures of Turkkai and Natarāca of this temple, in many respects, resemble the sculpture of early Pandyas at the Thirupparañkunram Murukan Temple.

4. The significant feature of the sculptures of this temple is the tablets that contain the names of the figures represented in the sculptural panel as an illustration. This type of inscrip-tional explanation was rare in those days.

5. Besides these, the Bronze image of the Natarāca, shines as a source of inspiration and unique specimen of the Cōlā art not only to the devotees but also to the connoisseurs and art lovers of the world.

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# **Thiruvottur Temple**

**S. Krishnamoorthi**

## **Introduction**

Thiruvōttur Temple is one of the most ancient ones in Tamil Nadu. The presiding deity is called Sri Vedapurisvarar because He taught Vedas to Rishis who forgot them<sup>1</sup>. It is noted from all the inscriptions that the God has been called Thiruvottur Udaiyar. This Thiruvottur is one of the parts of Cheyyar town. Cheyyar or Thiruvattipuram is 31 K. M. away from Kanchipuram. Both Palar and Cheyyar rivers are close by and the latter flows south of the Thiruvottur Temple here Sangam literature portrays the beauty of the river Cheyyar<sup>2</sup>. Kāsakudi copper—plate mentions about the river Cheyyar and palar. This temple attracted all the Nayanmars and was praised by their songs. But now Sambandar's hymn only is available.

## **Local Purānam and Thiruvōttur Temple :**

The place appears to have been one of the principle towns of Jains<sup>3</sup> and its temple probably belonged originally to those religionist who were subjected to dreadful persecutions referred to in the local purānam. It states that when the rakshasa Somakasuran stole the Vedas, the rishis could not perform the ceremonies. Later Siva appeared in the form of an aged man and taught them the holy writings at which they were greatly rejoiced and built a Temple and worshipped Siva in the form of Vēdapurisvarar. The Jains however questioned the authenticity of the new vads and one of the powerful kings living at punāvathi a large town but now a deserted village on the opposite side of the river produced a gigantic serpent to devour one Sambandar the most successful of the supporters of the new scriptures. Siva appeared as a Snakecharmer subdued the reptile by that strains of his pipe and sent him against the Jains whom that began to destroy. At last they submitted and the king with many of his people become saivaites. Some of the Jains still denied the truth of the Siva worship and Hindu religion and it was agreed that the rival Vedas should be subjected to a test by being dropped in the flood of Cheyyar. The result was that the Jain books floated down the river

as far as Anapattur while the Hindu Vedas moved against the stream for a distance of two miles to cheyyārrai. Venran (The Conqueror of Cheyyar). The Jains had to submit to the penalty agreed upon and some were hanged, cut to pieces and many crushed in to oil mills. These modes of execution were represented by sculptures upon exists within the temple with shape of a palmyra tree bearing male blossoms on one side and female blossoms on the other. It is about eight feet height cutout of a single stone placed under a small mandabam. On their account He is here called Ardhanarīśvarar and the fact that the God forms right portion of the sculpture is said to be account for the right hand being usually more powerful than the left<sup>4</sup>. Tondaiman a king reached heaven by worshipping Thiruvōtur God according to the local puranam of the 18th Century A. D. Periyapuranam, Kanchipuranam and other Literature also mentions that the Vedapurisvarar God and His fame

### **Chidambaresvarar Temple**

In the 7th Century during the days of Appar and Sambandar (the contemporaries of Mahendravarman I Pallava) Thiruvōtur became a Saivite centre of great renown. The present structure of the Vedapurisvarar garbhāgriha, ardhamandapa, ninches and mahamandapa should be ascribed to the age of the Later Cholas. The earliest Chola inscription at Thiruvottur were however, found on the walls of the Chidambaresvarar Temple in the northern side of the Vedapurisvarar Temple. There are seven inscriptions appearing on the walls. All are in the reign of Cholas and Rashtrakutas. An inscription of the 14th year of parakesari<sup>5</sup> which can also be assigned to parantaka I refers to a gift of a lamp to the temple of Thiruvottur Udaiyar by a native of Thiruvottur. The inscription of the 27th year of Rashtrakuta ruler Kannara Deva alias Krishna III<sup>6</sup> mentions a gift of 50 sheep for a lamp Kōdhandā mānrādi native of māmbekkam, a subdivision of pal kunra Kottam. There are two parakesari inscription of the 14th year which should be assigned to Uttamachola. The first<sup>7</sup> concerns a gift of a lamp. Sembiyan mādhēvi made a gift of 10 sheep for the maintenance of a lamp. Another inscription<sup>8</sup> of Uttamachola tells that the Queen Aruran Ambalathadigal gave a

gift of 25 kalanju of gold for a lamp. There is also an inscription of the 21st year of Raiaraja I<sup>9</sup>. However there is a foundation inscription without the name or the regnal year of the ruler<sup>10</sup> It simply records that the Sankaranārana Isvaragham was built by Adhitta kutti for the merit of his elder, made by the sabha of Thiruvottur. Now it is called chidambarēsvarar shrine. No inscription is found about Sankaranarana Isvaragraham other than the inscription of Adhitta kutti which mentions about the construction of the temple to Adhitta Chola proper by Adhitta kutt; would have been an officer of the Cholas. According to S. R. Balasubramanyam<sup>11</sup> this temple would have been constructed Adhittachola I, which is quite acceptable based on the style of writings in the inscription. Lōgammadevi wife of Rajaraja I, constructed a new temple at thiruvaiyarappar north of the temple<sup>12</sup> In the same way a new temple Adittakutti built at Thiruvothur temples.

### **Vedapurisvarar Temple**

The original temple built of brick should have been converted in to a karrali (Stone temple) in the days of Rajendra Chola I, in the 11th century A. D.<sup>13</sup> The earlist inscriptions here found on the north wall of the first prekara, may be one of the fourth year of Rajadhi Raja I.<sup>14</sup> But ther is one inscription without the name of king, and regnal year. Recently discovered this inscription byme at the sanction of the temple. The relevent text read as follows

Aramuraitha Nayanar  
Mathipallavan  
Thiruppani

This temple was reconstructed by Aramuraitha Nayanar alias Mathipallavan. Certainly this inscription may be after early chola period<sup>15</sup> The other mandapas and the shrine of the Goddess are later addition. The temple faces the east and the sanctum is (almost) a square. It is enclosed by thick wall. There are ninches (devakoshtas) on the three sides of the outer wall of the garbhgriha, and they contain stone sculptures Dhakshinamurthi, Vishnu and Brahma. The Vimana is also stone, but is now covered with stucco. The sikhara portion has under gone repairs at a later period.

At Thiruvottur Vedapurisvarar temple north wall of the prakara. Rajadhi Raja I,<sup>16</sup> Rajendra deva II,<sup>17</sup> Vira Rajendra,<sup>18</sup> Inscriptions are found, So the Thiruvottur temple mahamandapam, first prakara, would have been done in the fourth year of Rajadhiraja I. During the period of 15th Century A.D. koneriraja who was free from the control of Vijayanaghra Empire. Constructed the outer prakara and tower, along with the renovation work. Vishnu temple was also constructed during this century.<sup>19</sup>

### **Balagujambiga Temple**

Ilamulai Nachi Amman temple, facing south which stands towards north of the Thiruvottur vedapurisuvarar shrine may be constructed by one sundrapandiya. According to Mr. N. Sethuraman, Maravarman Sundarapandiyan ruled during 14th century A.D.<sup>20</sup> (1303-1322 A.D.) An inscription of the 12th year of maravarman sundarapandiyan that the temple arrangements were made to put lamps to Mulavar sannathy and Ilamulai Nachi Amman Sannathy. Before this, no inscription were found in Amman shrine. So, definitely this shrine, should be build during the later; particularly by pandiyas before 14th century A. D. After maravarman inscriptions, the Vijayanaghra king. Bukka II 's inscription was found at the basement of the Amman temple<sup>21</sup>. Now Amman is called Balagujambiga.

There are six Siva temples very near to the temple of the Chidambarasvarar Shrine. They may be of recent origin. But one temple (Lord Annamalai Isvarar) was constructed during the period of vira Ballale II, who was the contemporary ruler of Rajanarayana sambuvarayan<sup>22</sup>.

The chariot, vehicle, umbrella, were donated by Konedhi Dhimmaiadeva Maha Raja<sup>23</sup> Ananda porerrupillai was an agent of konedhi. During the period of Sadhasivamaharaja, Dalavayi Gopanayinigar constructed the yagasalai, and the madaipalli. Some ornaments also donated by him to vedapurisvarar God. This inscription was 16th century A.D.<sup>24</sup> Vignesvarar temple which is situated in the north Tiruvottur vedapurisvarar temple an ancient nature, but it's front portion was constructed in 1875 A.D., according to the inscription available<sup>25</sup>, Other Thiruvottur temples are all of recent Origin.



## The Cholas and Thiruvottur Temple

Thiruvottur vedapurisvarar temple might have been pallava foundation but the existing inscriptions relates to the chola periods. In this temple there is another temple which was constructed during the early cholas (may be adhitta I) Sembian madhevi and her daughter in law, Aruran Ambalathadigal donated for lamping the Tiruvottur temple seperately. An inscription of the 14th year of Parantaka, refers to a gift of a lamp to the temple of Tiruvottur Udaiyar by a native of Tirumerrali near kanchi<sup>26</sup> A few inscriptions mentions the establishment of flower garden to serve flower to God. In Thiruvottur temple we can see three flower garden inscription: one is Raja Raja I.<sup>27</sup> Kurukkadi kilan kandan alias Parakesari native of Thanjavur in order to set up a flower garden to the temple: his son or brother kandan alias Virakesari fenced the area, and made arrangements for the plantation of trees during the time of Raja Raja, the great. The second one is Rajaraja's II<sup>28</sup> An inscription of the 12th year of Rajaraja deva II, mentions that one Eranambi chetti established a flowergarden. It was called Thappamoli Nanthavanam. The third one is Vijayanagara period<sup>29</sup> In Rajendra's reign<sup>30</sup> Savani pudupakam Assembly took a decession. All karthigai festival days put in to lamp at Thiruvottur vedapurisvarar temple. The period of Rajendra II<sup>31</sup> records the gift of 90 sheeps for maintaining a lamp.

In the reign of virarajendra, three person donated three lamps<sup>32</sup> The Inscription of Vikramachola which are very helpful for history is found in believe temple great flood destroyed both the village Assembly passed a decession<sup>32</sup> The Village Assembly sold 2000 Kuli of wet lands for 25 kasus to one Adhittan Uyyavanthan, This amount was given to the Boojari of the temple. This has been recorded in an inscription of 6th year's of vikramachola. Incidentally the names of measuring rod used in the land survey; has also been mentioned. Another inscription of the 8th year of vikramachola, records the sale of 4250 kuli of dry land by the Ariyavur Assembly for 20 kasus<sup>33</sup>. The purachser made it taxfree, and gave it away to those who had to look after the Thiruvunnaligai sabha of the Thiruvottur temple. During the period of Kulottunga II,<sup>34</sup> while on hunting expedition. Selva

mutharaiyan missed his aim and shot his friend puliyan. The Village Assembly (Pannattar) decided that the quality should make a gift of some (maybe 16 cows) cows for the sin committed. An inscription of the 19th year of Raja Raja II<sup>35</sup>, mentions that an administrative Officer by name kilyapallavarayan alias Adhiyaman. He also donated one lamp to Thiruvottur God. During the period of RajaRaja II, and RajadhiRaja II, so many administrative officers or chieftains offered lands kusus, etc. to the Vedapuriswarar God.

During the period of Rajadhiraja II, we can see some political agreements also.<sup>36</sup> In the 33rd year of Kulottunga III, Sengai Ammaiappan Alagiyacholan alias Sambuvarayan, of Thattaicheri donated his whole lands to vedapurisvarar temple.<sup>37</sup> His lands were situated in so many Villages. Karanai Vilupparian alias ponnurkannudaiyan perhaps a royal officer made a grant of 100 kalangu to Thiruvottur sabha.<sup>38</sup> Temple shabha received pon and supplied two nerripattam to Vedapuriswarar God. Besides, these inscriptions, Kopperunjingan inscription also mentions the previous gift made in the 17th year of the reign of kulottunga deva III.<sup>39</sup> kulottunga 33rd regnal year onwards kalavai is called kalavai alias Rajanarayana Chethurdevi mangalam.

This village was situated in senkunra nadu, a sub division of Palkundrakottam. This Kalavai village a part of which was made a Bramin settlement under a new name During the period of Chola inscriptions, refers that Thiruvottur Eri, '(Lake) Sembiyan Madhevipereri, Jayangonda Chola Peraru (river) Raja Rajan Peruvali (high way) Selvakesari nali (liter) Varalayanmadam (mutt) Saiva ascetics, and so many village officer's. These are the few glimpses available of the glorious past of these places during the Chola period.

### **The Pandiyas and Thiruvottur Vedapurisvarar Temple :**

More than ten Pandiya inscriptions have been found. All are belongs to 13—14th century A. D. They are Maravarman Sunderapandiyan and Jadavarman Veerapandiyan. According to Mr. N. Sethuraman,<sup>40</sup> these Pandiyas would have been ruled

after Maravarman Kulasekara Pandiyan. So the period of these two kings lies between the 13th century A. D. and the beginning of the 14th century A. D. This is quite acceptable based on the Thithy and style of writing in the inscription. The Goddess (Ilamulai Nachi) shrine probably belongs to Maravarman Sundara Pandian. An inscription of the 14th year of Veerapandiya, is an important one. It records an agreement by Sri. Rudra, Sri. Maheswara of the temple to provide offerings to the God. Šomanatha Dhevar set up in the temple by a certain Sivanammai and for burning a lamp before this deity in lieu of the interest on 400 Kalam of paddy received by them, from the latter in the 13th year when the temple was without funds.<sup>41</sup> One Veerapandiya inscription records the gift of golden ornaments to the God by the Queen in her husband's name Kaliyugaraman thiruttol piriyaatha thirunagai.<sup>42</sup> Her name was Ulagamuludhudaiyar. Another inscription records that during 13th century Kulasekara Sambuvaraya donated lands to Cheyyarrai Venran Chathurvedhi mangalam, to Brahmin for reciting Vedas.<sup>43</sup> In 1315 A. D. Maravarman Sundarapandian<sup>44</sup> gifted lands for burning 76 lamps in front of the Mulavar Sannadhy and Amman Shrine. These lands were situated in so many villages. Some of the villages gifted half Veli and other villages offered 1 Veli lands. One Veli land was equal to 2 veli lands during this Pandiya period. We can easily identify all the villages. Sunderapandian's 12th regnal year inscription<sup>45</sup> states that the Thiruvaipadi Nattavar of the eighteen countries assembled in the hall called Amuthavallavan Thirumantapam agreed to give for each tiram i.e. (hard of so sheep, so cows, so buffaloes) a heifer, a lamp and a young buffalo to the God Thiruvotturudaiya Naiyanar, for the favours received by the other caste and family. During the period of later Pandiyas we can see Muruvarai and 'Yaranathiyagi' measurements in many inscriptions. Virapandiyan 14th regnal year inscription records the gift of the village Madurai alias Thiruvambalaperumal Nallur in Parasunadu a sub-division of Venkunra Kottam as Madappuram by the Nattavar (Assembly) of Attiparru, Alividaithangi; in Attiparru a sub-division of Jayagonda Chola Mandalam for worship and offering to the idol of Visvasura Nayanar and for feeding to tapasi (ascetics) in the Bhikshmath of Patanjali. Mahamunideva of Melacheir in Perumbatra Puliyur<sup>46</sup> one Sundarapandiya inscription mention

that he also worshipped Thiruvottur God. He and his wives and officers were dedicated to Thiruvatturudaiyar.

### **Part Played by Kopperunjingan in Thiruvottur Temple**

Very few Kopperunjingan inscription have been noticed in the Vadapurisvarar Temple. One is 20th regnal year<sup>47</sup> inscription; and another is 22nd regnal year<sup>48</sup> inscription. His one inscription mentions previous gift made in the 17th year of the reign of Kulothunga Deva III, that Veeraperumal Nachiyar daughter of Kalappala Nachi donated lands to Thiruvottur Udaiyar. Another inscription records the gift of 32 cows for a lamp by Thiruvegambamudaiyar alias Egambarabattar of Kanchi Kuri who describes himself as a Santanika Saivacharya. This Saivacharya might have been a notable person.

### **The Telugu Cholas and Thiruvottur Temple :**

Five Telugu Chola inscriptions have been copied from the Thiruvottur Vedapurisvarar temple. One of them belongs to the reign of Madurantaka Puttappichola, who ruled in the 13th century A.D.<sup>49</sup> It mentions a Sabha. It was called Jayangondachola-mandala Sabhai. This was a big assembly (District level Assembly) Puttappicholan second regnal year onwards; so many religious taxes (Thiruvudaiyattam, Agapararu, Vanniyaparru etc.) were reduced (6 Kalam paddy). During the period of Vijayakandagopala four inscriptions were found here which were important ones. A devaradiyar Cheyyandai alias Sambuveraya Nachi, daughter of Adaintha Janaga Kathal<sup>50</sup> who is a dancing girl of Thiruvottur ; set up an image of Lord Subramanya in the reign of Vijayakandagopalan. In the reign of the same ruler,<sup>51</sup> the image of Perummakkal Moovar (Three Saiva Saints) setup by a Nachiyar and Kadavaraya son of Udaiyalvar, providing worship to the Perummakkal Moovar; received special offerings in daily pūjas and other expenses. A resident of Thiruvottur,<sup>52</sup> son of Unnamulai devaradiyar; set up an idol of Goddess Kanakaraiselvi (now it is called Kangai Amman) in the reign of Vijayakandagopalan. Alapiranthan alias Raja Rajasambuvarayan made an endowment for providing worship to the image of Kanakaraiselvi. All idols are kept in Thiruvottur maha mandapam vell custody.

## **Sambuvarayar role in Thiruvottur Temple**

### **Introduction :**

The Sambuvarayars were a feudatory family like the Banas or Telugu Cholas and they flourished during the 14th century A.D. They were the rulers of the North Arcot district, parts of South Arcot district, Chengalpattu district and some portions of Chittur also. When Vijayanagara empire was established, these would have been started. Generally scholars of the view that Sambuvarayar came from 'Hoyma' Nadu.<sup>53</sup> Their epigraphs are largely found in North Arcot, Chengalpattu and Chittur districts. They are also called themselves Vanniyar, Nayakkar, Goundar, Palli, Padaiyatchi; Reddi and so on 'Vanniyar pexil Chilai elupadhu' was written by Kambar. 'Vanniya Puranam' is a community legend. According to this legend, Sambuvarayars were born in fire. The great Jambu saint was predecessor of Sambuvarayars. Accordingly Hiranya Varman who was the King of Pallavas and Cheraman Perumal Nayanar were kings of the Vanniyar community whether it is a fact or not is doubtful. Sambuvarayas to or Vanniyas were brave soldiers. Their duties were fight only. Secondary profession was agriculture. Even now, most of the Vanniyars are doing farming work. Before, 14th century A.D. Sambuvarayar remained loyal to the Cholas.<sup>54</sup> They were good administrators. Let us analyse some of the administrative works of the Sambuvarayas based on Thiruvottur temple inscription.

During the period of later Cholas Sengeni Viraperumal alias Attimallandar, Edhirili Chola Sambuvarayar, Attiyandan Ammai, Attiyandan son of Sengeni Virandan, Sengeni Virandan, Sengeni Ammaiappan, Alagiya Cholan alias Edhirili Chola Sambuvarayar, Veera Perumal alias Edhirili Chola Sambuvarayar and others donated lands, Kasus (coins) etc to the Thiruvottur Temple.

An inscription of the 14th year of Raja Raja-II records the gift of a village by Sengeni Attimallan alias Edhirili Cola Sambuvarayar.<sup>55</sup> The lands were situated in Chirriyārrur (Now it is called Chithathur) near Mavandur lake. The same Sambuvarayar again donated tax free lands to Thiruvottur temple for its maintenance. The taxes collected were donated by him to the same temple. Attimallandan was not only an administrative officer but

also a land lord and rich man. He donated 12,000 kasus (coins) for performance of daily pujas and festivals to the God.<sup>56</sup>

A political pact made by Sengeni Attiyandan alias Rajendra Chola Sambuvarayar with Sengeni Mindanciyan to stand together as against Attiyandan alias Vikrama Chola Sambuvarayar has been described in inscription of the 11th year of Rajadhi Raja-II. This was an important political pact.<sup>57</sup> In the 18th year of Rajadhi Raja, a gift of 32 cows for a lamp was made by Attiyandan son of Sengenivirandan. Another inscription of the 17th year of Raja Raja-II,<sup>58</sup> states that the village Chirriyarrur mentioned above was resumed by Vikramachola Sambuvarayar and that Damodaran Perumpanadi Nayaka with the permission of Gandagopalan got back half of this village as devadana of the temple while the other half as assigned as madappuram for feeding it inerant Mahesvaras in the Putpegiri Jiyarmathe. This new order was engraved in the temple with the premission of Viraperumal alias Edhirilichola Sambuvarayar. In the 33rd year of Kulothunga Deva-III, Sengeni Alagiyachola alias Sambuvarayar of Thattāicheri donated lands to Thiruvottur temple. These lands were situated in Kalavai alias Raja Narayana Chathurvedhimangalam and other villages.

In the 23rd year of Virapandiya (14th century A.D.) Kulasekara Sambuvarayar issued an order to Cheyyarrai Venran Chathurvedhimangalam Assembly. An endowment for feeding five learned Brahmins was made in the 23rd year of Virapandiyar by a villege Assembly, Kulasekara Sambuvarayan might have been a powerful administrative officer during the 13-14 century A.D.

In the history of Sambuvarayar we can observe some Raja Narayana Sambuvarayar. All of them ruled probably beginning of the 14th century (After 1321 A.D.). But Kulothunga Deva-III, 33rd inscription tells one Raja Narayana Sambuvarayan. During the period of Cholas, Sambuvarayas were not the independent kings. They were only administrative officers. Cholas and Pandiyas had some titles Sambuvarayar also assumed some titles. One of the title was Raja Narayana. But Sambuvarayar was the general title of all the Vanniya Kings.

The Sambuvaraya women also dedicated their life to Thiruvottur temple. Some of them donated lands or kasus. Cheyyandai alias Sambuvaraya Nachi, daughter of Adaintha Janaka Kathal established one Subramanya idol in Thiruvottur temple. After the decline of Cholas, so many fendatory families or Chieftains captured and established independent dynasty during that period. Venrumankonda Ekambra Chakkaravarthy might have been the first ruler of Sambuvarayar. Thirubuvana Chakkaravarthi Rajanarayana Sambuvarayan ruled 1339 to 1363 A.D. in Sambuvarayar territoray. A number of Raja Narayana inscriptions have been found. An inscription of 4th year of Rajanarayan states about a gift of madappuram lands<sup>59</sup> for the Thiruppattu songs. (Hymns). The same gift we can see in the 7th year of Rajanarayana<sup>60</sup> inscription also. Attiparru - Novalpakkam alias Thirunanga Sambandanallur Assembly engraved this gift in Thiruvottur sanctum. During the period of Sambuvarayar's Tamil hymns (Thirupattu) sung by odhuvar (singer) daily in the presence of God. Oduvar obtained taxfree lands in Attiparru. In the 6th year of Raja Narayana inscription records<sup>61</sup> an order of the chief communication to the trustee of the temple conferring the right of worship (in the temple) on Bhuvanekubabudevar son of Alagiya Thiruchchirumbalamudaiyar Ayyan and the grand son of Bhuvaneku Babu Devar. Another inscription of Rajanarayana records the details of taxes to be collected per loom from the kaikolas of Thiruvottur. In his reign Vira Kambana Nayanar alias Vira Vallala Devar set up an Annemalai Nayanar shrine in the same temple. Hence it may be of the 14th century A.D.<sup>62</sup> Infact during the period of Sambuvarayar we can see so many taxes. Taxes were very burden to ordinary people. But Sambuvarayas dedicated their life to preserve the Tamil Culture and civilization. All Hindu temples were normally functioning. So many temple festivals were celebrated during the period of Sambuvarayas. Besides, Sambuvaraya caste name, Vanniar, Nayakkar, Velālar and Padaiyatchi were also mentioned in those inscriptions and palm leave manuscripts. Around the Thiruvottur, majority of the people belong to vanniya community were living. They were participating in every temple festivals.

### **The Vijayanaghra Empire and Thiruvottur Temple**

A number of Vijayanaghra inscriptions have been notice in the Vedapurisvarar temple, Ilamulai Nachi Amman temple and

inner gopuram. One of them records the scarcity of irrigation water and about the settlement of water dispute between two villages<sup>63</sup>. These Villages were called Vayalur and Thiruvottur. Kampanna Udaiyar, the son of Vire Bokkanna Udaiyar inscription records a royal grant of 4 veli lands in Thiruvenkada Nallur situated in Attiparru, to Bharathvaja Saivadhiraja of Kanchikuri.<sup>64</sup> Saivadhi Raja was a native of Kanchipuram. Another inscription records a fixed levy of 100 panam per year imposed on the kaikkolas, Senaikkadaiyar and nainyer of Thiruvottur with the assurance that nothing more would be collected from them<sup>65</sup>. During the period of 15th century A.D. inscription<sup>66</sup> records an endowment of land after purchase by Madarasar Vasavanatigal of the Putimasha gotra, Asvulayana sutra and Rigveda to the temple for the maintenance of a flower garden and also gave house site (manai) for a satra. An inscription of the 16th century A.D.<sup>67</sup> (Sakayear 1466) mentions. Sadhasivamaharaja assistant yirrakudi permal donated lands and reconstructed yakasalai and madapalli other than buildings Another inscription<sup>68</sup> records the appointment of Koneri son of Selvakon of Dusi for the maintenance of a lamp in the Thiruvottur temple as the gift of Ayyan Vekappa Aiyyar. During the period of Vijayanaghra two dancing girls were performing dance in the temple. Their names were also given (Virremolai koil Nangai and Thalaikoil Nangai) They obtained lands in Vayalur.<sup>69</sup> A Kannada inscription of Narasinga Deva Maharaja have been found at Thiruvottur Temple. It states that on information received from his officer Medhiraja Chennaiya, and Chokkeneyanar that the village and the temple lands were completely washed away by the floods, the king remitted an amount of 150 pon (gold) out of Joti, Sulavari, pattadai and nulayam due from the temple and the village to repair the breaches and for conducting festivals in the temple.<sup>70</sup> One of the inscriptions without king's name and regnal year mentions, kedharimadam (mutt) It was functioning in Thiruvottur. Pallaverasa sivan, who was living in Thiruvottur, Kalandar street purchased temple lands and donated to mutt<sup>71</sup>. A house site (manai) was also given by him. His father Kangeyan was a hymnsinger (Thirupattu odhuvar). Another inscription (begin with Ananda) records an agreement made between the trustee, the Mahesvara and the accountant of the temple in the reign of Annadana Porerrupillai the agent of koneri temmaiya deva Maharaja not to lend out any of the articles belonging to the temple such as Thiruppariyattam poles of



temple vehicle, Thiruvadi thandu rope and ornament of the temple car umbrella etc.

### **Koneri Raja**

During the period of 15th Century A.D. Koneri Raja who was free from the control of Vijayenagra Empire ruled Thanjavur, Tiruchi and Kancheepuram area. Historians tell that he was a pro-saivite and disliked vaishnava religion. He subdued Srirangam Jiyar. But it is not true. Though he was a pro-saivite, he donated lands, kasus etc., to vaishnava temple. We can see his inscriptions vaishnava temples also. The Koneri Raja was a religious benefactor. He made large endowments to the temples in Srirangam, Srimushnam, Sirkali, Koneri Rajapuram, Kumbakonam, Thirumalapadi and Thiruvōttur. He built so many mandapams and goburams in his area and bestowed grants. About 1478 probably at the end of their campaign Koneriraja became independent. He strengthened the frontiers of his kingdom. Koneri Raja was the son of Vasuvasankara ruled between 1478 A.D. to 1498 A.D. His portrait which figures with labels have been recently noticed by me. The labels found here are in Tamil and Kannada letters. More than 16 inscriptions and coins have been noticed in so many temples of Tamil Nadu. But his figures can only be found in Thiruvōttur outer prakara. Here Koneri Raja and his two young Queens are seated in Palanquin (pallakku). Soldiers are running with palanquin. Four war-soldiers (Narpadai), are marching. Somebody is riding on a camel. Koneri Raja may be Kannada Brahmin. He was called himself Madhiyadha Maṇṇar Manavalan, Pattukattari, Kanchidura Varaphisvaran and other titles. He constructed the outer prakara and tower along with the renovation work. Kesava Perumal shrine was also built during his life time. In 12th century A. D. Sekkilar mentions in his periyapurānam about Thiruvōttur miracle. We can see Sambandar and Jains in struggle, pictures, on the southern side of the outer Prakara. Here Jaina woman figure is also found. This portrait sculpture chisled only on periyapurānam basement This belongs to Koneri Raja period (15th Century).

### **Festivals**

The Saiva saints have sung hymns on this Lord. They were worshipped the presiding deity (Thiruvōttur Udaiyar) and Goddess

(Ilamulai Nachi Amman). Most of the inscriptions refer Thiruvōttur Udayar. Temple festivals attracted crowd and during those celebrations fairs were held and dramatic performances, religious and moral discourses acrobatic feats and other entertainments were performed. In the reign of Vikramachola, Thiruvōttur Sabha celebrated every new moon festival. It was customary on the part of Thiruvunnaigai Sabha, to take out the idol (Uthsavamurthy) on procession on new moon days. There is an inscription of the 7th year of Vikrama Chola, records gift of land, after purchase by a Sivayogi worshipping in the temple for providing offerings to the God with the sennel variety of paddy. During the period of Vikrama Chola we can see Varalayan Madam (Mutt) and some Sivayogis. Thirvekembamudaiyar alias Ekambara Bhattar native of Kanchi made gift of land free of taxes for maintenance of one perpetual lamp in the temple.<sup>72</sup> In the 10th year of Virapandiya, Munaiyedaraiyar alias Kandiyevar made gift of tax free lands. It records a royal gift of the village Tavasi Perumpakkam in Parasir Nadu, a sub-division of Attiparru, free of taxes and devadana for meeting the expenses of the Virapandiyan Sandi instituted in the name of the king in the temple by Munayedariyar and for offerings and festivals in the month of Ani. In the days of Virapandiya, his Queen Ulagamuludhudaiyar makes a gift of gold ornaments in her husband's name Kaliyugaraman Thiruttol Piriyadha Thirunagai to the God. An inscription of the 15th year of RajaRaja II, mentions a gift of a lamp stand of brass for a lamp in the temple by a maid servant of Atti alias Keralantaga Nallur in Perunagar Nadu, a sub-division of Venkunrakottam. A merchant of Uttramerur makes a gift of Pon (Gold) for a lamp (Three stand Kuthuvilakku) in the 21st year of RajaRaja II. During the period of Pandiyas and Telugu Cholas so many idols were set up by some individuals. Ramachandra Dikshita Ayyar perhaps a royal officer of Vijayanaghra period made a grant of land in Kaliyur for conducting the third day festival in the month of Chittrai, of the God Thiruvottur Udayar.<sup>73</sup> Another inscription without King's name, mentions Chittrai festival, Ani festival and patham Thiruvila (Ten day festival) in the month of Thai.<sup>74</sup> Even now people conducting several festivals particularly the Brahmothsavam or Patham Thiruvila Kaikola mudaiyar conducting the first day festival of ten day festivals. Karnam or kanakkupillai spends the money to Vedapurisvarar second day festival. The third day festival celebrated with the aid

of Vanniyars. The fourth day festival is Harijans one. Vaniya chetty spend the money on six day festival. The seventh day Car festival is celebrated with the aid of Tamil Nadu Government. The Naidu caste people give money to celebrate eighth day festival. The ninth day festival is celebrated with the help of Chetty. The last day (tenth day) festival is celebrated in a grand manner with the aid of Agamudaya Mudaliyar. There are a number of wooden Vahanam in the temple. Poojas are performed thrice a day by Hereditary Brahmin. Few years back Thiruvottur temple was renovated and the Kumbabishekam conducted.

### **Couclusion :**

The temple is the House of God and a place of worship. It was the public record office of those times. All gifts and endowments by kings, Local bodies or Private individuals were with the approval of the local bordies engraved on loose stone slabs and later when temples were built on stone on the outer walls of the Vimana, the Mandapas and Prakaras of Temples; S. R. Balasubramanian tells these words in his book. These points apply to Thiruvottur temple also. The Thiruvottur Vedapurisvarar temple activities were thus directed towards the promotion of the welfare and happiness of the community.

### **NOTES AND REFERENCE**

1. Thiruvottur Vedapurisvarar Puranam.  
Othu means Vedam-Thiruvalluvar also mentioned this word.  
<sup>1</sup>மறப்பினும் ஒத்துக் கொளலாகும் பார்ப்பான்  
பிறப்பொழுக்கம் குன்றக் கெடும்’.
2. <sup>1</sup>காணுநற் வயாஅம் கட்கின் சேயாறு—Sangam Literature.
3. Samanamum Thamilum-Mylai Seeni Venkadaswamy.
4. North Arcot District Gazettair census.
5. 102 of 1900.
6. 101 of 1900.
7. 104 of 1900.

8. 118 of 1989-40.
9. 100 of 1900.
10. 103 of 1900.
11. Early Chola Temples-S. R. Balasubramanyam.
12. Thiruvaiyar-Rajagopal.
13. Kulampandal-Gangaikonda Solapuram temple was constructed by the Rajendra-I. The same period Thiruvottur temple might have been renovated.
14. 76 of 1900.
15. During the 16th Century A.D. we can see Aram Valartha Nayanar in those inscriptions. But Aram Uraitha Nayanar was an earlier one.
16. 76 of 1900.
17. 85 of 1900.
18. 80 of 1900.
19. Kesava Perumal temple is a not a familier one. But one Vishnu Sculpture with Sridhevi and Boodhevi is a beautiful kept in Vedapurisvarar temple.
20. Two Jatavarman Sundara Pandyan By N. Sethuraman.
21. 104 of 1900.
22. A. R. E. 1939/40—120.
23. A. R. E. 1939/40—122.
24. A. R. E. 1939/40—110.
25. This inscription was discovered by me.
26. Thirumerrali was also a famous saiva centre.
27. 100 of 1900.
28. 91 of 1900.
29. A. R. E. 1939/40-80.
30. A. R. E. 1939/40-118.
31. 85 of 1900.
32. 86 of 1900.

33. 87 of 1900.
34. 79 of 1900.
35. A. R. E. 1939/40-85.
36. A. R. E. 1939/40-100.
37. 103-a of 1900.
38. 93 of 1900.
39. 83 of 1900.
40. Two Jatavarman Sundara Pandiyan-by N. Sethuraman.
41. A. R. E. 1939/40-89.
42. A. R. E. 1939/40-87.
43. 92 of 1900.
44. 97 of 1900.
45. A. R. E. 1939/40-92.
46. A. R. E. 1939/40-115.
47. 83 of 1900.
48. 94 of 1900.
49. 82 of 1900.
50. A. R. E. 1939/40-95.
51. A. R. E. 1939/40-117.
52. A. R. E. 1939/40-93.
53. Abhidana Sinthamani.
54. The Cholas-K. A. Neela Kanda Sasthri.
55. A. R. E. 1939/40-105.
56. A. R. E. 1939/40-112.
57. A. R. E. 1939/40-100.
58. A. R. E. 1939/40-106.
59. 99 of 1900.
60. 95 of 1900.
61. A. R. E. 1939/40-113.

62. A. R. E. 1939/40-120.
63. 104 of 1900.
64. A. R. E. 1939/40-90.
65. A. R. E. 1939/40-102.
66. A. R. E. 1939/40-80
67. A. R. E. 1939/40-110
68. A. R. E. 1939/40-78
69. A. R. E. 1939/40-119
70. A. R. E. 1939/40-107
71. 98 of 1900
72. A. R. E. 1939/40-122
73. A. R. E. 1939/40-76
74. A. R. E. 1939/40-116

# Temples at Puhar

A. VelusamySvadandaran

## Introduction

Puhar, also known as 'Poompuhar' is located just fourteen miles to the east of Mayavaram in Tanjore district. It is also known as Kavirippūmpaṭṭiṇam". In "ancient days this place was called 'Charitrapura'. 'Kākanthi' was also the other name given to Poompuhar. The earliest reference to Kāviri-pūmpaṭṭiṇam is in a Prākṛit inscription of second century B. C. found at Bārhut in Northern India.<sup>1</sup>

## Literary Evidences

Literary works give a vivid account about the importance of this place. Existence of the different kinds of temples in those days as well as other matters of importance are revealed from those works.

### (a) Poompuhar in Silappathikaram.

The work mentions the existence of different kinds of temples in this region.

The are as follows :

Amarar Tharukkōṭṭam, Veḷyānaik Kōṭṭam  
Puhar Veḷḷai Nāgartham Kōṭṭam Pahai Vāyil  
Uccikkiḷāṇ Kōṭṭam, Ūrkkōṭṭam Vēr Kōṭṭam,  
Vacchirakkōṭṭam, Puṇampāṇiyāṇ Vāḷ Kōṭṭam,  
Nikkanthak Kōṭṭam, Nilākkōṭṭam (Silap-Kanāṭṭiṇam 9-13).  
But at present time, so such temples are present.

### Poompuhar in Puṇanāṇūru :

The importance of Poompuhar, as a trading centre was revealed from the verses in Puṇanāṇūru, The verses are as follows:

Mippāy Kūmpōḍu Kaḷaiyāthu Miśaipparan Tōṇḍāthu  
Puharp Puhuntha Peruṇkalam, tahāar

Idaippulap Peruvaḷic Coriyum  
Kadalpala tāratta Nādu Kiḷavōyē"

(puram 30).

Poompuhar in Paṭṭiṇappālai :

Uruhiraṅkaṇṇanār describes the trade contact of Poompuhar with other countries. The commodities which reached the port at Poompuhar also described by him in the following way :

"Neerin Vantha Nimirparippuraviyum  
Kālin Vantha Karungaṇi mūdaiyum  
Vadamalai piṇanta Maṇiyum Poṇṇum  
Kudamalaip piṇantha āramum ahilum  
Tenkatal Muttuṅ Kuṇakaḷal tuhirum  
Kaṇḡai Vāriyum Kāviriṇ Payanum ilattunavrum Kāḷakat  
tākkamum  
Ariyavum periyavum neriya indi  
Vaḷantalai mayaṅgiya nanantalai maṇugin  
(Paṭṭiṇappālai. 185-193).

Poompuhar in Maṇimēkalai :

Like Kāñchipuram, Poompuhar also played an important part as the Buddhist religious centre. Manimēkalai describes the existence of Buddhist Viharas. Recently, the Archaeological survey of India, Southern circle, revealed a Buddhist Vihara in this place by conducting the excavation. The bricks exposed here are similar to the bricks of the Viharas, noticed in Nāgārjunakoṇḍa in the Andhra State. Due to the similarities found in the materials, scholars are of the opinion that the Vihara exposed in Kāviriṇpūmpaṭṭiṇam belonged to the period of second century A. D. like that of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.

Like wise, the importance of Puhar as trading centre is also revealed through the excavation. Near the sea shore, a large number of Chola Coins and Roman Coins have been unearthed.<sup>1</sup> The presence of the Chōḷa and Roman coins confirm the contact between Puhār and Rōme during the Saṅgam period. Further, the excavation revealed wooden poles near the sea-shore. The purpose of the presence of the wooden-poles should have been to anchor the ships in those days. The



ancient reservoir, seen in this place is a testimony to the irrigational activities of the Chōla period.

### **Temples at Puḥar**

Temples mentioned in the work *Silappatikāram* (mentioned earlier) are not identified. Moreover it seems, all of them should have been sub-merged under the sea. But anyhow, some temples at present, stand as a testimony to the religious importance of this place. Among them, I have selected only five temples. They are a) Nāganāthan Kōil b) Sampapathi Amman Temple c) Pallavaneeswaram Temple Cāyāvanam Temple and e) Mēlapperumpaḷḷam Temple.

#### **Nāganāthan Kōil**

The temple has no architectural and sculptural importance. Originally it was constructed out of bricks. Later, it was renovated with stone. No inscriptions are present. The size of the bricks as well as the plan of the temple indicate that the temple should be an ancient one. A speciality of this temple is that it is dedicated to Kēthu, one of the Navagrahas. It is worthy of note that there are separate shrines for all the other eight Navagrahas in South India. Thus for Sun-Sūrya, there is a temple at Sūryaṇār Kōil (Tanjore Dt), for Moon-Chandra, there is a shrine at Tiruvārūr (Tanjore Dt), for Mārs at Vaitheeswaran Kōil (Tanjore Dt), for Mercury at Tiruveṅgāḍu (Tanjore Dt.), for Jupiter or Guru at Ālaṅgudi (Tanjore Dt.), for Sukra or Venus at Kaṇyanūr (Tanjore Dt) and for Saṇi or Saturn at Tirunallār (Tanjore Dt).

#### **Sampapathy Amman Kōil**

The temple, dedicated to the Goddess Campāvathi is now in a damaged condition. Two stucco images are now visible. Dr. Nāgaswamy identified this figure as Durgai.<sup>2</sup>

A number of references are given to this deity in *Maṇimēkalai*. Cāttanār calls this temple as Mutiyōl Kōṭṭam, Uraiṇut Kuṭikai and Kuccarak Kuṭikai.<sup>1</sup> Scholars opine that the temple was built by Gurjara architects. The image of the deity was formed out of brick and mortar. As this deity did

penance under a Campu Tree, it is also known as Cambu. Her tresses are matted and spread out. As her antiquity can not be understood by anyone, She is denoted by the epithets like Mutumūtāṭṭi, Tonmūtāṭṭi, Muttalai Mutalvi and Mutiyāḷ.<sup>1</sup> In Maṇimākhilai it is said that before facing the people gathered in the open yard, Maṇimākalai worshipped thrice Campāpathi. In the same manner, she worshipped this deity, before she left for Jāva. Campāpathi that guards the lands and comforts of all people is aptly called as Māperunteyvam.<sup>2</sup>

The roof of the temple is in the form of an elephant's back. The roof is now in a damaged condition. The temple contains the Sanctum Sanctorum and a preceding maṇḍapa. At the entrance of the Sanctum are present two female door-keepers one on each side. Each one of them has spreaded hairs, protruding teeth belly stomach and large-sized breasts. Inside the Sanctum, nothing is present. The presence of this temple stands as an evidence to show the antiquity of the custom of the worship of the Mother Goddess in Tamil Nadu.

#### Temple at Cāykkāḍu

In ancient days, this place Cāykkāḍu was included in the Kavirippūmpattinam region. This is confirmed by the boundaries, as mentioned in Silappathikāram. In the ancient times, the present places like Karuvēnthapuram Kadāraṅkoṇḍan had served as the western boundary to Kavirippūmpattinam. As the place Cāykkāḍu is located to the west of Kadāraṅkoṇḍan and Karuvēnthapuram, it is a confirmed fact, that the place Cāykkāḍu should have been included in the Kavirippūmpattinam. The following lines from the hymns of Sambandar, also confirmed the fact that Cāykkāḍu formed one of the parts of Puhar region. The lines are as follows:

“Taṇpuhārc Cāykkāṭ ṭēntalaivan”

“Kāvirippūpaṭṭiṇattuc Cāykkāṭṭen paramēṭṭi.”

Moreover, the antiquity of the place and its fertility known from the lines from the Saṅgam literary work “Ahaṇāṇūru”.

The lines are as follows:

“Cennelan Ceruvin Aṇṇamtunjum”<sup>6</sup>

“Pūkkēḷupadappaic Cāykkāṭṭaṇṇa”<sup>7</sup>

Inscriptions of the temple

The temple contains eleven inscriptions in total. They were copied in the year 1911, by the Archeological Survey of India, southern circle. The inscriptions belonged to the Chōla kings like Vikrama Chōla Kulottuṅga Chōla and Rajaraja III. No inscriptions of the early Chōla kings are present.

The inscription reveal the political, economic, religious and social conditions.

### Political Background

The presence of the Chōla inscriptions indicate that Chōla kings had a strong control over this region. The inscriptions of the other nearby temples at Puṅgai Talaicceṅgāḍu and Tiruveṅgāḍu also testify the supremacy of the Chōla kings over this region. Four inscriptions belong to the period of the king Vikrama Chōla. One of his ministers namely Tiruciṅṅambalavan constructed a muṭṭ to feed fifty Brahmins. The identification of the Muṭṭ is not known. After the king Vikrama Chōla, the temple got the patronization from the king Kulōttuṅga III. His inscriptions are five in number. They are dated from his fifth year to thirtyfifth year, i.e., A.D. 1213. It indicates a long period of his supremacy over this region. After the period of the king Kulōttuṅga III, the temple came under the control of the king Rajaraja III. His inscriptions are two in number and are dated from his 5th regnal year (A.D. 1221) to the 8th regnal year (A.D. 1224). They mention the religious services.

### Economic Condition

The main source of income to the temple was from the lands donated by both individuals and members of the royal family. Contributions were made to the temple in the form of gold ornaments also.

### Taxation :

The income derived from Taxes, was used for the religious services. The policy of taxation, was directly under the control of the members of the royal family. An epigraph dated in the eighteenth regnal year of the king Kulōttuṅga III, mentions the direct interference of one Rājanārāyaṇa Mūvēnthae Vēḷān, one of the officers of the king in the matter of taxation.<sup>8</sup>

## Land Measurements

The land Measurements are nā, Vēli and Kuḷi. Nāḷi was used to measure the commodities like Paddy. An epigraph <sup>(9)</sup> dated in the 35th year of the King mentions one "Cāyāvaṇa Nāḷi". From the name it is seemed that the temple had owned a separate Nāḷi mainly meant for the temple services.

## Religious Condition

Most of the inscriptions mainly give in detail, the religious services. It shows that the life of the people in general was mingled with religion. An undated epigraph of Vikrama Chōḷa mentions that an individual namely Kunāgaran, made an endowment of lands for the performance of worship in the temple. <sup>(10)</sup> In the year A.D. 1123, one of the ministers of the king namely Tirucciṅṅambalavan constructed one mutt to feed the fifty Brahmins who did the religious service in the temple. <sup>11</sup> In the year A. D. 1221, an individual namely Maruthamaṅgalamuḍaiyāṇ, donated lands to the temple to burn lamps. <sup>12</sup> In the year A.D. 1224, an endowment of land was made to make a flower garden in the name of the King Rājarāja III. <sup>13</sup>

## Social Condition

In the Society, Brahmins were allowed to do the religious services. For their survival, lands were given as tax free lands. As most of the endowments, are in the form of lands and commodities mainly of Paddy, it seems that Agriculturists played a notable part in the society.

## Architecture

The main component parts of the temple are the Sanctum Sanctorum, Ardhamāṇḍapam and Mahamāṇḍapam. The Sanctum and Ardhamāṇḍapam are enclosed by an enclosure wall. The inner Prākāram contains no shrines. The ardhamāṇḍapam has pillars, having cushion capitals, typically belong to the Chōḷa period.

The Mahamāṇḍapam has pillars, which also belonged to the Chōḷa period. The Northern side of the maṇḍapa has the Durga shrine which is enclosed by an inner wall, constructed by the Saraboji king. The southern side has an entrance. All the

parts are enclosed again by an outer enclosure wall. The eastern entrance has the remains of the basement of a gōpuram. The basement is decorated by pilasters which have cushion capitals, belonged to the Chōḷa period.

### Sculptures

Stone images enshrined on the walls of the Sanctum Sanctorum are the Lingōdbhavamūrthy, Brahma and Dakshnamurthy. Their facial expressions and the presence of large number of ornaments indicate late Chōḷa period. Among the bronze images, the image of Murugan is an important One. He is in standing pose. Among the four hands, two upper hands are holding Sakthi and Vajra and the lower two hands are in the pose of holding a bow. Due to this pose, the name "Villēnthiya Vēlan" is applied to this image. The other image having the above features was noticed at Jāmbavan ōdai in Nāgapattinam Taluk and now the image is in the Government Museum at Egmore. These are the only two images represented as if carrying the bow.

### Pallavaneeswaram Temple

The name of the temple indicates that the temple should have had relationship with the Pallavas. But inscriptions pertaining to the Pallava Kings are not present. Not only that, the architectural styles of the different parts of the temple also indicate the absence of Pallava influence.

But anyhow, some other evidences reveal the Pallava influence in the regions in and around. A Meitreya bronze image, noticed at Melaiyur, a nearby village is in Pallava style. The facial expressions and the treatment of the lands suggest the Pallava style of ninth century A.D. Moreover the bronze image of Somāskanda group, present in the temple is of Pallava style.

All the above features indicate that the Pallava influence might have penetrated in these regions in the year ninth century A. D. As regards this temple, the Pallavas might have constructed the temple out of bricks and it was constructed out of stone during the later period.

The hymns of Sambandar reveal the importance of the Gods and Goddesses of this temple. The ancient literary works like Silappathikāram and Maṇimēkhalai also refers to this temple.

#### Inscriptions of the temple

Only two inscriptions are present in temple. Of them, one belongs to the Pāṇḍya King Maṇavarman Sundara Pāṇḍya I. The inscription simply mentions the endowment of the lands made to the temple.<sup>14</sup>

The other epigraph belongs to Rājaravutta Ninda Nāyanār which also mentions the endowment of lands made to the temple for conducting pūjas, festivals and also for some renovative works.<sup>15</sup>

#### Architecture

The entire temple is enclosed by an enclosure wall. The component parts of the temple are the Sanctum Sanctorum, Ardhamanḍapam, Mahamanḍapam and Muhamanḍapam.

#### Vimanam

Based on the style of the Sikharam, the Vimanam of this temple comes under Vesara style of architecture. The Sikharam is circular in shape. The Vimanam is divided into six parts. They are Adittāṇam, kall or wall, prastaram, Greeva, Sikhara and Kalasa

#### Adittāṇam

It contains the following parts namely Upanam, Jagathi, Kumudam and Pettigai. Kumudam is in round shape.

#### Kall or wall

This portion contains the Sanctum Sanctorum. The walls of the Sanctum have Lingodh Savamurthy Dakshinamurthy and Brahma.

#### Prastharam or cornice

The friezes of Bhūtagaṇas and yālis. Only incomplete chaitya window decorate:

## Greeva

The Greeva is decorated by the stucco figures of deities as well as human beings.

## Sikharam

The sikhara is round in shape. It has facets or sides around.

## Kalaśam

It is made of copper.

## Ardhamaṇḍapam

It has four pillars in two rows. The bōdigai has pendant drop designs. The palagai in huge size. Pūmunai design is present in the palagai. The base has Nāgabandhah design. The centre part of the shaft is divided in to eight facets or sides. All these features indicate a late period. The northern wall of the ardhamāṇḍapam has two dēvakōshtas and they contain the images of Durgai and Chandeswarar. The southern wall has also a dēvakōshta, but no image is present.

The entrance of the ardhamāṇḍapam has two door-Keepers, one on each side. They are all small in size.

## Mahamandapam

It has two entrances; one is in the east and the other is in south. It is an amalgamated part of the arthamaṇḍapam. There are eight pillars in two rows. Each row has four pillars. A small size stone image of rishabham is present in the centre of the maṇḍapam. The bōdigais of the pillars have pendant drop design. The pillar is divided in to two squares one on the top and the other in the bottom. The portion in between the two squares have eight facets or sides. The base has no Nāgabandhah. The unique feature of the Mahamaṇḍapam is the presence of lattice window on the southern wall. All these features indicate a late period of sixteenth century A.D.

## Muhamāṇḍapa

It has six pillars in two rows. Each row has three pillars. It was constructed by Nāttukkōttai Chettiyars. The pillars have

figures representing Viṇayagar, Dancing lady, Cow and Calf, Yāli, Elephant, Swan and Rishabhas.

### Prākāram

The temple has only one prākāram. At the very entrance of the Rājagōpuram, the Surya Shrine is present in the southern side, attched with the enclosure wall. Madappaḷḷi is also very close to the Surya Shrine. Then comes the Pattinattār Shrine. It is in the southern side and faces the north. Inside the shrine paṭṭinattar image in the standing pose and the hands are in aṇjali pose. The shrine seems to belong to very late period. The Vinayagar shrine is present in the south-west corner. Its Vimanam is in Gajaprishta form. On the north-western corner of the prākāram is present the shrine of Murugan with Vaḷḷi and Deivayānai. This structure is a recent one.

### Gōpuram

A Rājagōpuram is present in the eastern side of the entrance. The gōpuram is a recent one constructed by Nāṭṭukkōttai Chettiyaṛ.

### Sculptures

The temple has both stone and bronze sculptures.

### Pujas and Festivals

Pujas are performed according to Agamic texts. The different kinds of festivals of this temple attracts many devotees from different areas.

### Temple at Mēlapperumpaḷḷam

The place name “Mēlapperumpaḷḷam” has significance. The name might have been given to this place, due to the presence of a hole (paḷḷam), over the liṅgam of this temple.

The other reason might have been due to its location in the lower level (Paḷḷam), comparing with other parts.

The temple has been refered in the Dēvāram works. The legendary accounts pertaining to this temple is also an interesting, one.



The component parts of the temple are the Sanctum Sanctorum, ardhamaṇḍapam, Mahamaṇḍapam and the Muhamaṇḍapam. The whole parts are enclosed by an enclosure wall.

#### Sanctum Sanctorum

The wall portions are decorated with pilasters which are nine in number. In between the pilasters, number of decorated figures are present. Three dēvakōshtas have the images of Liṅgōdhabhava-murthy, Dhakshinamūrthy and Brahma.

#### Arthamaṇḍapam

The outerwalls of the maṇḍapa have nine pilasters in total. They have typical late Chōḷa Capitals. Northern wall has the dēvakōshtā for the Goddess Durga.

#### Mahamaṇḍapa

There are twelve pillars in two rows. Each row contains six pillars. The pillar is divided into three parts namely (a) the capital (b) shaft and (c) Base. The capital is in cushion form. It is in the typical Chōḷa period. The shaft portion is divided into two squares. The portion in between the two squares is divided into eight facets or sides. The square portion contains flower designs.

#### Mahamaṇḍapam

Sixteen pillars are present in four rows. Each row contains four pillars. The bodigai has pendant drop design. This feature indicates late period of sixteenth century A.D., for the construction of this maṇḍapa. The whole part, is enclosed by an enclosure wall.

#### Prākārams

The temple contains two prākārams. The inner Prākāram comes only around the Sanctum Sanctorum inside. This inner Prākāram has no shrines and pillars.

#### Outer Prākāram

Outer Prākāram contains Nandi Pavilion, Palipītam, Chandi-kēswaramūrthy shrine and well.

### Enclosure wall

No shrines or rooms are present in the Northern and Southern sides of the enclosure wall.

Three shrine chambers are attached with the western enclosure wall. First one has the images of Saptamātrikas, Vināyakar and four Nāyanmars. The second is dedicated to Murugan (Chenthi-lāṇḍavar).

The third shrine is dedicated to Gajalakshmi. Two shrine Chambers are attached with the eastern enclosure wall. One is dedicated to Bhairavar.

The second one is dedicated to Sūrya. No gōpuram is present on the eastern side enclosure wall.

### Sculptures

Both stone and bronaze sculptures are present in large number. Regarding stone, both Bas-relief sculptures and High - relief sculptures are present.

Among the bronze images, the image has Bhikshāṭanār occupies an important place. It seems to belong to twelfth century A.D.,. It has Jatamakuta. The right and left ears have Makara-kuṇḍalams and Patra-kuṇḍalams respectively. He is in smiling pose. Arched brows are present. It has four hands. Right upper hand in the pose of holding Veena. Right lower hand is in the pose of giving food to an antelope, which is in jumping posture. Sūlam is present in the upper left hand. The lower left hand is also in the pose of holding the Veena. Armlets, Keyūras, wristlets are present. The image is a notable one for its delicacy and execution. A snake is encircling on the wrist, of the right lower hand. Ringlets and anklets add beauty to this figure. In an inscription the image has been referred to as 'Vaṭṭaṇai-kāṭṭavantha Nāyanar'.

### Mention of this in Inscriptions of the temple

Totally, nine inscriptions are present. They all belonged to the periods of the Chōḷas. Of the all nine inscriptions, eight belonged to the period of Vikramā Chōla and the remaining one

belonged to the king Kulōttuṅga I. The inscription gives a clear picture about the political, economic, social and religious conditions of the contemporary period.

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# **Muruka in Iconography**

**Dr. A. V. Jeyechandrun**

The origin and development of the cult of Muruka is of absorbing interest particularly in Tamil Nadu where his worship has an unbroken link of several centuries. The popularisation of this cult involved a process of syncretism and the adoption various deities as his manifestation.

The Tamil word Murukan is derived from 'Muruku' which means tenderness, tender age, youth, beauty<sup>1</sup>. Muruka true to this meaning, is the most tender, handsome, benevolent and much-sought after God of the Tamils. Diametrically opposite to this meaning of the word 'Muruku' are the war-like qualities attributed to his alter ego the Devasēṇāpathi (commander - in - chief of the Deva's forces) a veritable Indian Mars.

## **The Tamil Tradition :**

Long poems on Muruka are found in Pattupāṭṭu and Paripāṭal, two works of the Sangam period. Tirumurukāṇṇup-pāṭai<sup>2</sup>, one of the ten songs in Pattupāṭṭu, details the places sacred to Muruka and the rituals and worship held in his honour. However, it is in the eight long poems in Paripāṭal that we have a fuller account of the birth, attributes, worship etc., of Muruka.

The account of the birth of Muruka found in Paripāṭal<sup>3</sup> is woven with certain Tamil traditions. The story is that after the conquest of the Tripuras, Siva developed a great and unquenchable infatuation for Uma. Indra, the lord of the devas intruded and asked Śiva a boon, namely, to let pass the vital fluid<sup>4</sup>. Angered at this, Śiva grants the boon but shatters the discharge to smithereens with his red hot battle axe. The seven sacred Ṛshis during their meditation, came to know about this and being aware of the potency of the seed of Śivam, obtained it from Indra. Deciding that it would be

improper to offer it as such to their wives, they let the discharge first into the three sacrificial fires. Collecting the leavings of the sacrificial oblation they offered them to their wives. Except one, six others ate it and became pregnant. They gave birth to their babies on the lotus matting in a lake in the Himalayas.

The author of the poem, Kaṭuvan Ilaveyinaṇar states that this is the puranic account;<sup>5</sup> but we find the author deviating from the original puranic story by avoiding all those portions which do not confirm to Tamil tradition. Particular mention should be made of the tradition of chastity, karppu. All references to the extra marital cohabitation of Agni with Svaka and the wives of the Ṛshis, are scrupulously avoided. Pollution was prevented by offering the seed, first as sacrifice in fire, and the collected remnants alone distributed to the wives of the Ṛshis for consumption. In another poem, Kuṇṇam Pūtaṇār extolled Muruka for his marriage with Vaḷḷi in the Tamil tradition<sup>6</sup>. The entire poem seems to dwell on the superiority of the kaḷavu form of marriage involving no ritual, but only the consent of the bride and bridegroom. Vaḷḷi marrying Muruka in the kaḷavu form became dearer to the Tamils than Deivayānai's wedding in the arranged fashion. The entire hillock of Tirupparamkuṇṇam (Madurai) sheltered the lovers locked up in embrace and immersed in unfulfilled passionate love-play<sup>7</sup>.

Paripāṭal<sup>8</sup> refers to a number of Gods who assembled at Tirupparaṅkuṇṇam for the sake of Muruka. They were: the brahmanikite-bannered Viṣṇu, Siva riding his bull, Indra, the twelve Ādhityās, Asvini Devatas, Aṣṭhavasus, Ēkodash Rudras, Dikpālakas, Ṛshis well versed in scriptures, and other devas. The inconsistency of Muruka's greatness in Tamil country and his meanness of his birth in the puranic version is also pointed out.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Indigenous Worship:**

It is likely, viewing the trend of the poems of Partipāṭal that the authors derided the increasing changes brought about

in the worship of the indigenous Muruka cult, which had by then given its place to pompous ritualistic pūjas and festivals. In almost all the literature of the Sangam period one discerned only the god of the mixed pattern. Muruka is referred to as the son of Koṭṭavai,<sup>10</sup> and son of Siva.<sup>11</sup>

The story of the birth of Muruka in Paripāṭal as already referred to is repeated in other Sangam works<sup>12</sup>. The āyudās (implements) held by Muruka are: cēval (chanticleer), capam (bow), maran (tomara), vāḷ (sword), iṭṭi (spear), koṭārī (axe), kaṇicci (chisel), maḷu (elephant-goad), mālai (akshamaḷa) and maṇi (bell)<sup>13</sup>. The peacock banner of Muruka is referred to in Akanānūru and other Sangam works<sup>14</sup>. The chanticleer was also one of the Banners of Muruka<sup>15</sup>. Elephant was also one of the mounts of Muruka during the Sangam period<sup>16</sup>. The other mount is peacock. The Silapatikāram<sup>17</sup> also mentions a temple of the God whose banner was the cock instead of the peacock<sup>18</sup>.

The piercing of the Krauñca hill by Muruka's lance and the vanquishment of the Sūra and the mango tree are referred to in Tirumurukāṟruppaṭai, Perumpāṇāṟruppaṭai, Patirrupattu, Paripāṭal, Akanānūru and Kalittokai<sup>19</sup>.

### **As Revealed in Nature :**

The nature lore in Sangam poetry examined little more closely unfolds the forgotten tradition in his cult. The kaṭampu tree and flowers were most sacred to Muruka. The foot of the Tirupparankuṇṇam hill was covered with its flowers. Kāntal (gloriosa superba) associated with the lord of the hill is so sacred that even the bees dared not to touch its petals<sup>20</sup>. It is likely that Vēnkai and vetci are other flowers associated with the God. Before anthropomorphism entered into the cult of Muruka, Tamils worshipped him only as revealed in nature. "His cult is indissolubly connected with montane nature<sup>21</sup>. The spots he chooses for his greatness and for bestowing his favour upon his clients, are the places where nature is most alluring such as the wood and grove and enchanting ilet, the river, and lake and such other places.

In his worship, his devotees use the flowers of the mountain region such as the *kāntal* (*gloriosa superba*) the *veṭci* (*redixora*) and other red flowers. He himself is decked with a wreath of red *veṭci* blooms and garlands of flowers from his favourite tree, the *kaṭampu* (*Eugenia racemosa*) which is sacred to him and from his ears hang the leaves of the *Asōka* tree (*uvaria longifolia*). His devotees revel in the newness of life and beauty that the hill wears after the first rains in August and September, when the tanks are filled with aquatic flowers; when the *konṛai* (cassia tree) hangs pit on its branches golden garlands, the *vēnkai* (*pterocarpus bilobus* or the kino tree) bursts into bloom, the *gloriosa superba* unfolds its rosy fingers, and the bees and the beetles make music like the strings of the lute, while the peacocks and peahens cry as if appealing to the departed lovers to linger no more but return to their own".<sup>22</sup>

These references in Sangam literature lead us to the forgotten Tamil tradition in Muruka worship. Most of the hills and dales and natural caverns where Muruka was worshipped came to be occupied by the new comers during the third and second century B.C., Viz., Jains who practised austerities and who by their novelty of their teachings etc., soon caught the fancy of the Tamils and their kings. Muruka yielded his place to them and during the Sangam period we notice him in his transformed anthropomorphic aspect, enshrined in the puranic stories and installed in early temples. Muruka had abandoned his tree and mountain shelters to occupy built up structures on the hills.

Epigraphic studies have revealed that in South India the earliest professions of this cult are to be traced to the *Ikshvākus* of the *Andhradesa*.<sup>23</sup> The *Ikshvākus* ruled over the Krishna Guntur region. The *purāṇas* called them *Sriparvatīyas*-rulers of *Sriparvata* and *Andhrabhṛtyaṣ* (Servants of the Andhras). The *Cuṭu Sātakarṇis* of the Deccan and Karnataka were votaries of the cult. The *Kaṭamba* kings who succeeded them began to declare their devotion to the *kaṭamba* tree, under which according to the Tamil tradition Muruka dwells. The Chalukyan inscriptions mention *Kārttikēya* and *Swami Mahāsena*.<sup>24</sup>

The mighty Paḷlavas who established themselves in the fourth century A.D. with their capital at Kāñci and who held sway over the Northern part of Tamilnadu, — Tondaimandalam — were great devotees of Muruka. Their names, Kumara Viṣṇu, Skanda Varman, Vīra Varman disclosed their regard for the Muruka cult and we find them naming themselves so, repeatedly.

### Integration in Tamil Nadu

The Pallavas were performers of Sōmayāga, Vājapeya Agnishtoma and Asvamedha sacrifices and they called themselves as Parama Brahmanas, Parama Bhagavatas and Parama Maheśvaras, Muruka as the lord of fire, sacrificial altars, Lord of knowledge, as the commander-in-chief of the devas' forces could never have failed to captivate them, with the result we see him deified as one of the trinities in the Trimurthi cave in Mamallapuram.

### Tevaram Hymns

The Tevaram hymns composed during the rule of the Pallavas contain very few references to Muruka-son of Siva.<sup>25</sup> The God is referred as Sarvanattāṇ and Vēlaṇ husband of Vaḷḷi, the Kuṟava maiden. What is surprising is the absence of separate shrines (Syampradāna temples) for Muruka. Except for the Kārttikeya temple excavated in the Ikshvāku capital of Vijayapuri,<sup>27</sup> in Nagarjuṇakonda and evidence of a Subramanya shrine at Kāverippakkam and also existence of small shrines in the abodes of Siva, Muruka temples are unknown during the seventh to eleventh centuries. Of course, Muruka appears as a Koshṭha figure in Pallava temple e.g. Dharmaraja ratha at Mamallapuram.

There is a view that Sakadeva ratha at Mamallapuram and the sculpture of a two armed deity seated on the neck of an elephant (who could also be Indra on Airāvata) in the upper tier of the Eastern face of the Arjuna ratha may be related to Muruka.<sup>28</sup>

In the Somāskanda panel Muruka appears from the time of Paramesvaravarman I. However, Somāskanda panels do not appear at all in the Muttaraiyar and Pandya cave temples except at Tiruparañkuṇṇam.



## **The Temples of Muruka:**

Searching for early Muruka's temple down South in Tamil Nadu, we land on one at Anaimalai, known as Lāḍam Kōvīl (Kandan kōyil) adjoining the rock cut cave temple of Narasimha near Madurai. Muruka is seated with Vaḷḷi and the two banners, the chanticleer and the peacock, adorn the entrance. The temple is dated to 8th century and despite its antiquity there is no reference to this cave temple of Muruka at all in religious literature. According to inscriptions<sup>29</sup> it is surprising that Tiruchendur temple, one of the present sacred shrines of Muruka, is referred to only as Siva's shrine. So too, is the case with the cave temple at Tiruparañkuṇṇam, Muruka does not happen to be the main deity in both the caves belonging to the period around the eighth to tenth centuries.<sup>30</sup> At Tirumalai cave, Ramanathapuram district, a fine sculpture of Muruka as Kumāra is found only as a parivāra deity in the main Siva shrine known as Malaikkolūndiṣvaram. The lower rock cut temple at Tiruchirappalli contains a sculpture of four armed Kumāra. At Kaḷugumalai the monolithic temple as an exquisite representation of Muruga in the upper tier of the Vimāna. A sculpture belonging to a later period viz, tenth century similar to the piece referred to above is found at Tiruvorriūr, near Madras city.

## **Revival of the Cult:**

The Muruka cult seems to have gained greater popularity from the middle of tenth century A.D., perhaps the momentum having been provided by the construction of a temple solely dedicated to Subramanya in Kannanur in Pudukkottai area. From this time onwards the cult of Muruka takes deeper roots in Tamil Nadu and in the fifteenth century. Aruṇakirināthar, a great poet in Tamil whose soul-stirring songs characterised by a unique lilt, made it the most accepted cult in Tamil Nadu. Aruṇakirināthar followed the Saiva Siddhanta school, though his supreme deity was Muruka. He missed no shrine of Muruka in his pilgrimages and on the Lord installed in each of these shrines, he has composed poems noted for their rich diction and vivid imagery.

The songs of Aruṇakīrinātar are still rendered by the Tamils and where ever they are sung, it is believed Muruka stands besides and enjoys them.

Saint Ramalinga Svamy of Vaṭalūr who lived the during the late nineteenth century also considered Muruka as an Absolute. His Tiruvaruṭpā<sup>81</sup>, containing souleful songs, was responsible for further spreadidg the cult in Tamil Nadu and enabling it to spread to the nook and corners of the sub-continent.

### **Astronomy and Astrology:**

In the Sangam period the Tamils were conversant with astronomy and astrology. The presiding deity of the montane tract was Muruka and was called Ceyyōṇ. Ceyyōṇ is also the name of Mars. Muruka is the lord of life, death and resurrection to the Tamils who considered his twelve hands as the houses of the zodiac. A closer examination of the houses of the zodiac and their lords, the planets in exaltation etc. would bear out the truth of this statement. Mars is the presiding deity of the signs of Aries, and Scorpio. Sun is exalted in Aries, and Moon in Taurus. Muruka as Mars becomes the lord of life, the Solar hero in Aries with exalted Sun. He is the lord of death because of his exaltation in Capricorn; the house of the āyulkāarakā—Saturn. Scorpio represents sex organs from out of which all mammals issue fourth in the never ending cycle of birth and death hence as Lord of the Sign. Mars (Muruka) is the Lord of resurrection.

Muruka is associated with star Kṛittika, Pleades constellation In the zodiac, a fourth of the star is the sign of Aries where the Solar father the Sun, is exalted and the rest three fourths in Taurus where the Lunar Mother, the Moon, is exalted. Muruka, the son is thus always in between the exalted Solar father, and the exalted Lunar Mother. Because of the three-fourth of the star being in Taurus he is delienated as more inclined towards the mother Uma, rather, sitting on her lap, Is the Somāskanda panel of the divine triad, 'Siva' Uma and Skanda found in Tamil Nadu sculptures and bronzes an artistic visual manifestation of the astronomical truth?

## Forms of Muruga :

The Omnipresent and the omnipotent is nameless and formless. The anthropomorphic conception of this nameless and formless Absolute seems to have been based on certain fundamental concepts.<sup>32</sup> The first is that the image, be it a stone or a bronze, is a piled up accumulation of life forces. The second is that the image itself is the product of concentrated thought and action of the sculptor. The dhyana slokas which the sthapa-  
this repeat while carving the image transfers the animation from his mind to the image. The third dogma is in the belief the prāṇa prathishṭā ritual embeds vitalizing force the image and this force is kept alive supercharged every day by the shoḍasōpachāra pūjas etc. performed daily in temples. Performance of such pūjas, eight times a day, is considered ideal, and the most famous and popular temples in Tamil Nadu receive pūjas eight times a day. Light and Life in Stones : Great efforts are taken in selecting a stone of certain specifications for carving an image, in order to ensure that it has potentialities to retain surcharged doses of life force transferred into it during and after its installation. Existence of life force in a stone has been demonstrated by the Nobel Laureate Dr. C. V. Raman. He has discovered that growth-decay and continuous change are perceptible in crystals. Precious stones and semi-precious stones seem to retain life and light for a long time and hence sacred objects are made out of them for installation and worship in temples. The radio active discharges that emanate from the deity seem to create the necessary solemnity in the devotee, and ensure his soulful identification with it.

Kumāra Tantra,<sup>33</sup> Sritattvanidhi,<sup>34</sup> Subrahmaṇya Parākrama<sup>35</sup> and the Silpa texts speak of the forms of the lord. These texts also narrate the benefits of worship to such forms. As no two minds are agreed on all metaphysical issues, so too no two forms of the lord are the same ; and in Hindu pantheon one comes across as many forms of gods and goddesses as there are different kinds of mental and moral make up of men. There is a view that these seemingly different figures of Muruga, are replicas of visions noticed by the evolved in the inner recesses of their mind.

In iconometry, the Muruga form is executed in adhama daśś tāla in other words, the height of the figure to be prepared, dictated by the yajamāna who orders its making, is divided into

116 parts—each part being known as 'aṅkula' and this aṅkula becomes the unit of measurement. (This aṅkula is to be distinguished from the present usage of the word which now means an inch in the English scale).

The colour of the complexion of Muruka also varies from figure to figure. Tolkāppiam, the earliest Tamil work in extant<sup>1</sup> speaks of Muruka as 'Ceyyon' or red. The colours of Muruka are : the reds (sindūra, aruṇa, rakta, kunjabam dāḍimapushpa, kumkum ; the whites (sukla svāta) the dark colour (syāma) and yellow (pīta).

The Silpa texts seem to be of recent date and certainly not earlier than the tenth century and may perhaps be total revisions of earlier texts. A survey of the more important sculptural representation of Muruka in the historic monuments may be useful in obtaining an idea of the form in which he was represented, and worshipped in the early and medieval historic periods,

#### **The earliest representation :**

The earliest sculptural representation of Skanda in South India as the younger member of the Sivā's family may be assigned to the period of Vishṇukuṇḍins and that of the early Pallavas whose suzerainty extended to some of the Andhra districts during the time of Simhavishṇu.<sup>96</sup> The sculpture belongs to the local Siva temple of Madugula in the Macherla area in Andhrapradesh. Baby Muruka is perched on the hip of Uma and held by her right arm. Uma is standing on the right of her lord and her left hand catches the biceps of the seated Siva.

In the two local Siva temples in the village of Biccavoly, East Godavari district Skanda is delineated as Koshṭha figures. He is seated on a peacock holding in his right hand his lance and on his left a cock and is placed on his lap. The lord is seated in the sukāśana and beneath his seat two bearded devotees are offering pūjas. The entire niche is adorned by a florid makara tōrana. In another koshṭha in the second temple, Muruka is seen fondling a peacock with his right while his left holds a lance.

#### **Muruka in Mamallapuram**

Muruka appears as one of the trinities in the three-celled—Tirumurthi temple at Mamallapuram. Siva is in the central cell

and Muruka and Viṣṇu occupy the other two cells. Comparing this temple with the Maṇḍagapaṭṭu cave temple of Māmalla, some scholars are of the view that Muruka figure may be a representation of Brahma, since the figure carries in the three hands a padma, japamāla, abhaya mudra, while the fourth is in ūru posture. The main feature which differentiates this figure from Brahma is the absence of yagñopavīta in the Muruka form. The figure, instead of the yagñopavīta, a characteristic of Siva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā has only a channa vīra—a feature noticed in the delineation of Subrahmaṇya's figure roughly till the ninth century. This is the figure of Subrahmaṇya known as Brahmaśasta when he took over the act of creation, from Brahma. Further from Kumāra Tantra, it is seen, that the Dvarapālakas of Subrahmaṇya's shrines are not the usual ones of Siva's temples but are Brahmins. The gate keepers of this shrine are Brahmins with jaṭāmuḍi and three stranded yagnipavītam.

Again at Mamallapuram, Muruka figure in the koṣṭha on the Eastern side of Dharmaraja ratha, Muruka is in standing posture with channa vīra and while two hands are in abaya and ūru hasta, the other two hold padma and japamāla. The two handed figure riding on an elephant in the upper tier of the Eastern face of Arjuna ratha is identified as Muruka.<sup>87</sup> One hand of the figure holds the ankuśa while the other is placed on the thigh in a characteristic pose. A similar figure is also found in the upper tier of Mūvar koyil vimāna in Kodumbalur. This figure answers all the description of Indra and hence it may not be Muruka.

While all the four rathas at Mamallapuram are in one line, Sakadeva ratha stands alone opposite to them, facing South. It is likely that it is intended for Skanda, the God held supreme by the Tamils. The Elephant mount of lord is seen besides the ratha.

### **Muruka in the Pandya Country**

About this time in the ninth century in the Pandya country, a rock cut cave temple springs up solely intended to house Muruka with his consort, Vaṇṇi and his banners. Known locally as Lāṇan koyil (Kandan koyil), and executed on the Western side of Anaimalai near Madurai District, the cave temple has many

unique features. The cock and peacock banners are seen on either side of the main cell. The door keepers are two Brahmins, one a brahmachari and the other a gṛhastha. The lord is seated holding a flower in his hand. A channavīra adorns him. On his left is Vaḷḷi.

Disappointment awaits us at Tiruparaṅkuṇṇam, one of the conventional six sacred abodes of Lord Muruka. In none of the two caves, on the North and South of the hill, Muruka is the principal figure. In the South cave, Muruka is in standing posture with Vaḷḷi and Deivayāṇai on both sides. The main deity of the cave temple complex is Umaiāṇḍān while the central figure in the Northern wall facing the entrance is Nataraja. At the cave on the Northern side of the hill, Muruka is found only with Deivayāṇai and with considerable paraphernalia. The figure is a bas-relief on the flank of the main shrine cell-dedicated to Durga. However the original dedication of the Northern side cave is to Siva (in 773 A. D.) Who is seen in a cell facing East represented as Linga. Subramaṇya is seated and on his left his consort, Deivayāṇai. On his right is a dwarfed, bearded figure with jaṭābhara possibly Agastya. On the seat is a panel composed of peacock, elephant, two gaṇās, a ram and another gaṇā holding aloft a kukkuṭadhvaya. Brahma and Sūrya and Chandra are seen as flying forms.

The rock cut Siva temple at Malaikkoḷundiśvaram in Tirumalai in Ramanathapuram District presents another majestic form of Muruka as Kumara-the youthful, in dvibhanga with his hand placed on his left hip and his right hand hanging down. A gaṇā holds an umbrella for the lord. A tall dhvajastambha with cock banner is also carved there. Again in the pedestal are seen reliefs of ram and peacock.

The four armed figure of Muruka in the lower rock-cut cave temple in Tiruchirapalli deserves study. He has a channa vīra on his chest.

The sculpture of lord Muruka in the second tier of the Pāṇḍya monolith at Kaḷugumalai is another example of early representation of Subrahmaṇya. The seated figure is four handed with channavīra

on the chest. Two of the four hands carry the śakti and the japamāla. Almost similar sculpture is found in Tiruvorriyūr temple belonging to Aparājita (885--903 A.D.). In the Punjai temple in Tanjavur District a Sikivāhana is found in one of the panels. A tenth century sculpture of Sikivāhana from Kāncīpuram is in Madras Museum. The peacock in this sculpture is of diminished size. Sikivāhana representation is also of diminished size. Sikivāhana representation at the cave temple in Mūvaraivenrān in Ramanathapuram District belongs to eleventh century.

### **Features of Muruka forms**

Muruka is represented in sculptures in a variety of ways. He is represented as standing or sitting on a padmāsana or a peacock either alone, or with one devi or both devis. Muruka figures as a young boy, either with or without yagnōpatīta. He is also sculptured as a youth of resplendent beauty.

### **Kumara Tantra and Sritattvanidhi**

Suprabhēdāgama prescribes navatāla for the image of Skanda.<sup>38</sup> The image may be made of stone (śīla), sand (mṛth), timber (dāru) or metal (lōhā). The image may be two, four or eight handed. If two handed, the hands hold lotus (padmas); if four handed they carry vajra, śakti, abhaya and varada mudrās; if eight handed the āyudhās are khaḍga, pāśa, vajra and śakti besides padma, the two other hands are in abhaya and varada postures. The figure of Skanda may be seated on a Padmāsana and if so he will be delineated as two handed. Skanda in standing posture will have four hands. The lord on a peacock will always have eight hands and with parivāra dēvatās. Elephants may also be a vāhana of Muruka. Invariably Skanda must be represented with yagnōpavītā.

Kumāra Tantra in the chapter on Prathimālakshana<sup>39</sup> describes five forms of representing the lord, either (i) two handed, (ii) four handed, (iii) six handed, (iv) eight handed and (v) twelve handed.

### **Two handed :**

There are five representations of the two handed deity. They are: (i) one hand in abhaya mudra and the other on

the hip (kaṭibandha), (ii) one hand carrying lotus and the other on the hip, (iii) one hand holding daṇḍa and the other on the hip, (iv) Śakti in one and Vajra in the other and (v) Śakti in one and kukkuṭa on the other.

#### **Four handed :**

Seven variations are prescribed in the four handed representations of the lord. They are in relation to the āyudhas and mudras held by the four hands. The seven permutations<sup>40</sup> and combinations are :

- i) Vajra, Śakti, Varada and Abhaya.
- ii) Abhaya, Varada, Akshamāla and Kamaṇḍalu.
- iii) Kuṇḍika, Akshamāla, Śṛk and a hand on hip.
- iv) Abhaya, Varada, Sakti and kukkuṭa.
- v) Abhaya, Sakti, kukkuṭa and Akshamāla.
- vi) Sakti, Kamaṇḍalu, Abhaya and a hand on hip.
- vii) Kukkuṭa, Sakti, Abhaya, and Kheṭaka.

#### **Six handed :**

The six hands of this form of Subrahmaṇya carry abhaya, khaḍga and śakti on the right and kheṭaka, akshamāla, kukkuṭa on the left.

#### **Eight handed :**

Subrahmaṇya in his eight hands carry besides varada and abhaya mudras, vajra, śakti, kaḍga, kheṭaka, śara and cāpa.<sup>41</sup>

#### **Twelve handed :**

The combinations that mark the six variation of the twelve handed lord are :<sup>42</sup>

- i) Sakti, śara, kaḍga, dhvaja, gadā and abhaya in the right hands; and vajra, dhanu, kheṭa, padma, śūla, vara, in the left hands.



- ii) Sakti, bāṇa khaḍga, chathra, pāśa, prāsāritha (varadam) in the right hands; and cakra, śankha, kukkuṭa, dhanur, daṇḍa, hala in the left hands.
- iii) Sakti, musala, kaḍga, chatra, pāśa, abhaya, in the right hands; and vajra, dhanur, dhvaja, kheṭa, ankuśa, varada, in the left hands.
- iv) Sakti, kaḍga, dhvaja, padma, kukkuṭa, prāsa, daṇḍa, varada, abhaya, dhanur, bāṇa, tanka.
- v) Vajra, Sakti, daṇḍa, chatra, pāśa, ankusa, gadā, Sūla, chakra, padma, varada, abhaya.
- vi) Sakti, carma, asī, sūla, viśikha, abhaya, kārmuka, cakra, pāśa, kukkuṭa, varada.

Kumāra Tantra further classifies Subrahmaṇya's images into three groups: āsanam, sthānakam and dhyānakam. Āsana images are seated and sthānaka images are standing. Āsana images are two handed while standing figures are four handed. The dhyāna figures are six, eight or twelve handed.

Subrahmaṇya figures are also classified into yōgam, bhogam and yānakam. Yōga figures are usually seated and two handed and represent sātvikam aspect of the God. The bhōga forms are standing and four handed. They are of the rājasam aspect.

The figures with more than four, hands which are grouped under dhyānakam and yānaka are of tāmasam aspects since they are associated with wars. They are worshipped to get over enemies, diseases and mental afflictions.

### **The forms of Muruka :**

The more important forms of Muruka are mentioned in the Kumāra-tantra and Sriattvanidhi. They are : 1. Guha, 2. Subrahmaṇya, 3. Skanda, 4. Saktidhara, 5. Dēvasēnapati, 6. Gajavāhana, 7. Kārtikeya, 8. Shanmukha, 9. Sēnāni, 10. Tārakāri, 11. Brahmaśāstha, 12. Vaḷḷi kalyāṇa Sundara, 13. Bālasvāmi, 14. Krauñcabheda, 15. Sikhivāhana, 16. Agnijāta, 17. Sourabeya, 18. Gāngēya, 19. Brahmachāri, 20. Desika, 21. Kumāra, 22. Saravaṇabhava.

Silparatna of Sri Kumāra gives a general description of Subrahmaṇya and mentions his other names as Guha, Subrahmanya and Guru.<sup>43</sup>

#### **Guha :**

The word (Guha) means a cave, hiding place - the heart of the devotee. A tamil poem speaks of Muruka stealthily entering like a thief the evolved hearts of his devotees.<sup>44</sup> He is portrayed as red complexioned. He endows the deva-fold with bliss. He shines with red jewellery and carries on his lips a benign smile. He has the śakti in one of his hand and the other is in the abhaya mudra.

Sritattvanidhi describes Muruka as black or dark blue and three eyed. He wears a gold and rathna krita. In his four hands he carries the śūla, the vajra, and the varada and the abhaya mudras. He wears white apparel, and on his left is his devi. He stands in the handsome posture, of a bride groom. His feet are like lotus flowers.<sup>45</sup>

Adi Sankara in Subrahmania Bujangha speaks of Muruka at Tiruchendur as Guha.

#### **Subrahmanya :**

Kumāra Tantra describes him as red complexioned. Though saffron red in complexion, the face of Subrahmaṇys is cool and radiant as the moon. He is wearing ornaments like keyūra kaṭaka. He is a bestower of the pleasures of svarga. In his four hands are the padma, the sakti, the kukkuṭa and the abhaya mudra. He wears a red apparel and his chest is covered with sweat semlling paste. He vanquishes the fear and other obstacles of his devotees.<sup>46</sup>

Kumāra Tantra provides another description of Muruka. He is here single faced and one of his two arms hold the abhayamudra while the other is placed on his hip (kaṭi). Muruka shines as the sun.<sup>27</sup>

#### **Skanda :**

Bhagavath Gita refers to Skanda as 'Senānim aham

Skanda· ..... Skanda, the commander of Deva forces. It is also one of the names of Siva<sup>48</sup>

Skanda is stated to bestow boons on his devotees like (kalpavṛksha) says Kumara Tantra.<sup>49</sup> In colour he resembles the red lotus. Single faced and two handed he is in standing posture with loin cloth (kaupīna) with his right hand holding a daṇḍa and the left resting on his hip (kaṭi). This form is known as Paṇi Āṇḍavar after the main deity installed at Paṇi, the most sacred spot of Muruga in Tamil Nadu. He is stated to be born of kātyāyini.

Sritattvanidhi<sup>50</sup> describes Skanda as four handed and with two eyes and seated on a lotus (padmasana). In his four hands, he carries the cock (kukkuṭa) perhaps a banner, the thunder bolt (Vajra), the protecting (abhaya) and the boon offering ensignias (Varadha mudras). His hair-do is bedecked with flowers, while his waist band (mekala) is studded with rare gems. Dark as cloud (dūmravarṇa) in complexion, but filled with effulgence is Skanda.

Skanda is depicted by the two authorities in two colours: the lotus and the colour of the smoke.

### **Saktidhara :**

Saktidhara is the form of Muruga who holds the sakti. The Sakti āyudha symbolises, the three states of energies, the iccā sakti release of desire, the gnāna sakti, the result of knowledge and the kriya sakti which comes about by learning and right action.

Kumāra Tantra <sup>51</sup> describes Saktidhara as single faced, two eyed with Jaṭāmakuta, garland of white flowers adorning the neck. The form has two hands holding on the left the vajra, and on the right the sakti,

Sri tattvanidhi<sup>52</sup> names this figure as Vēlāyutar (Saktidhara). Single faced and two handed he is red in complexion. One hand his is on the hip (kaṭi) and the other holds daṇḍa (Sakti). He is the son of Kātyāyini.

### **Senapathi :**

Senāpati is described as six faced and ten handed in Kumāra Tantra.<sup>53</sup> His Devī (Deivayāṇai) is seated on his left and one of his hands embraces her with warmth, with the fingers lingering over her well formed breast. Senāpati wears a soft smile on his lips. In the nine hands he carries shield (khēṭaka), trident (sūla), thunderbolt (hrādi), sakti, bow (Ishvāsa), club (ghana), gadā, cock (kukkuṭa) and lotus (abja).

Sritattvanidhi<sup>54</sup> describes the lord as single faced and two eyed. He bears in his four hands the saṅkha the cakra, the varada and the abhaya mudras, Decorated with ornaments, his body is covered with sweet smelling sandal paste. Dark in colour (śyāma varṇa), he wears a white yajñopavītam. The sweet smile on his lips and the most handsome face are the other marks of Dēvasēnāpati.

### **Gajavahana :**

Gajavāhana is the form of Muruka riding on an elephant referred to in Tamil Sangam literature as Piṇimukha.<sup>55</sup>

This form of the lord is worshipped for the fulfilment of desires says Kumāra Tantra.<sup>56</sup> Single faced, two eyed, he rides on an elephant. He has in his right hands the varada mudra and the kukkuṭa and on his left hands the abhaya mudra and the śakti. Son of Īsvaram he has the radiance of ten thousand Suns.

### **Karttikeya :**

Kārttikeya is described in Kumāra Tantra<sup>57</sup> as six faced and six handed. His complexion is that of a lotus and the radiance of the rising sun-Bālasūrya. He is worshipped by the Sadhus and in his three right hands he carries the abhayam, the sakti, and the khaḍga. In his left hands the lord holds the varadamudra, the thunderbolt (kulisa), and the kheṭam.

Sritattvanidhi<sup>58</sup> portrays Kārttikeya as riding on the back of the peacock and as the son of Siva. On the head he wears Bilva (Bilvadhāriṇam). He has a single face and three eyes. He is ten handed. He carries the Sakti, the śula, the cakra, the aṅkuśa,

and the abhaya in his right hands and the varada, the tōmāra, the pāśa, the saṅkha, and the vajra in his left hands. Kārttikeya is red complexioned.

### **Shanmukha :**

Kumāra Tantra<sup>59</sup> describes Shaṇmukha as seated on a peacock and red complexioned. He is born amidst the śaravaṇa reeds. He is six faced and is the Lord of Deva's forces, He is twelve eyed and twelve handed. In his rights he carries the śakti, the bāṇa, the sword (kṛpāṇam), the dvaja, the gadā, abhaya. In his left hands he holds the bow (cāpam), the vajra, the lotus (sarōja), the keṭaka the śūla, the varadam.

Srītattvanidhi<sup>60</sup> also ascribes red complexion to Shaṇmukha who rides on a peacock. On his two sides left and right respectively are found two devis, Jaya (Devaseṇā) and Vijayā (Vaḷḷi) in his twelve hands the lord carries the śakti, the sara, the khaḍga, the cakra, the pāśa and the abhaya mudra on the right and the kukkuṭa, the dhanu, the ketaka the saṅkha and the plough (hala) and varada mudra on the left, He is heavily ornamented.

### **Senani :**

Senāni delineated in Kumāra Tantra,<sup>61</sup> has six faces and twelve hands. He carries in his hands the abhaya, the asi, the cakra (rathaṅgam), the aṅkusa, the śakti, the śūlam, the varada, the kuliśa, the pāśa, the padma, and the daṇḍa and the gadā.

### **Tarakari :**

Muruka gets the name of the Tārakāri after vanquishing Tārakāsura one of the asurās, who was teasing the Devas. Tārakāri bestows bliss and wards off the problems of life of his devotees. Tārakāri shines like a crore of suns. He is twelve handed. In his left hands are seen the varada, the aṅkuśa, the dhvaja, the keṭaka, the cāpa, the vajra, while in his right hands the abhaya, the pāśa, the cakra, the kaḍga, the short pestle (musala) and the śakti.

Srītattvanidhi<sup>62</sup> describes him as single faced but three eyed. He is seated on the back of an elephant. He is six handed. His right hand carry the abhaya mudra, the kaḍga and the śakti while

his left hands kheṭaka, the akshamāla, the kukkuṭa. He is red in complexion.

### **Brahmasasta :**

Brahmaśāsta possess the attributes of Brahma. Single faced, two eyed and four handed, his right hands carry the aksha sūtra and abhaya while his left hands carry the varada and the pot (kuṇḍika). The lord is lotus eyed. In this aspect, Muruka is worshipped as the lord who put down the pride of Brahma by exposing latter's ignorance of the Vedas.<sup>63</sup>

### **Vallī Kalyana Sundara :**

Vaḷḷi Kalyāṇa Sundara is red complexioned and is worshipped by all Devas, says Kumāra Tantra.<sup>64</sup> In this right hands, he carries the akshamāla and the abhaya and in one of his left hand the Kuṇḍika is held while the other is on his ship (śroṇibandham. Vaḷḷi Devi stands on his side. Brahmā performs the Homa. Viṣṇu with the kalaṣa in his hand is in the pose of offering water as token of giving away Vaḷḷi in marriage.

### **Balasvamy :**

Bālasvāmy is single faced. In this right and he holds the padma, and his faced on hips (Kaṭi). He has the colour of a lotus.

In the other delineation he is single faced and two eyed and holds the lotus in both of his hands. The colour is of the morning sky. He is represented as standing between his parents or alone in the Sōmāskanda composition.<sup>65</sup>

### **Krauncabheda :**

Kumāra Tantra<sup>66</sup> attributes six faces and eight hands to this form. In his right hands the lord carries the abhaya, the sharp sword (kṛpāṇa), the śakti and the bāṇa while his left hands carry the varada, the kulisa, the cāpa and the kheṭaka. His complexion is compared to the lotus.

śrītattva nīdhī<sup>67</sup> describes the lord as single faced but with three eyes. He is seated on a siṃhāsana and in his hands he carries the varada, abhaya, pushpabāṇa and the bow of sugar cane (ikshukārmuka). He has a benevolent look. His two hands are

engaged in aiming an arrow at the krauñca hill. The lord is red complexioned.

### **Sikhivahana :**

Kumāra Tantra<sup>68</sup> describes this form as single faced and four handed, holding in them the vajra and sakti, the varada and the abhaya mudras. The lord is of the colour of the coraḥ.

Srītattva nidhi<sup>69</sup> portrays Sikhivāhana as single faced, three eyed four armed. In his four arms he holds pāsa and aṅkusa, varada and abhya mudras. He rides on a peacock and is red complexioned as a red lotus,

### **Agnijata :**

Agnijata, that is Muruka born to Agni. is described in Srītattva nidhi<sup>70</sup> as two faced lord with eight hands. He is blue in complexion and has a dark neck. In his right four hands he carries, the laddle used in sacrifice (sṛuva), the rosary (akshamāla), the sword (khaḍga) and the remaining hand is in the svastika. In the other four hands he carried the kukkuta, the vajra the khēṭaka and a ghee pot ārya pātra.

### **Saurabeya :**

Saurabēya is described by Srītattvanidhi<sup>71</sup> as four faced eight eyed and eight armed. He is seated on a kamalāsana with left leg bent (kuñcita) and right leg hanging sūsthita. In his right he handscarries sakti, the lotus (nīlōtpala). the arrow made up of flowers, (pushpabāṇa) and the abhaya mudra. in his left hands he carries the vajra, a sugarcane bow (ikshudhanu), the sūla and the varada mudra. He is of the colour of red lotus.

### **Gangeya :**

Srītattvanidhi<sup>72</sup> describes Muruka in this form as one who rides on the Makara. He is red complexioned. He has a single face with three eyes. He wears the karaṇḍamakuṭa. In his right hands he carries the parasu and the pūrṇa kumbha and in his left hands the araṇi (a piece of wood used in generating fire). The symbol on his flag is a chanticleer (kukkuta dhvajam).

### **Brahmacari :**

This is yet another form that finds mentioned only in *Sṛitattvanidhi*.<sup>73</sup> Single faced, two eyed and two handed, this form of Muruka has a tuft of hair on his head. A mekala made up of

grass (mauñji) he wears. In his right hand he holds the daṇḍa and in his left the vajra placed on the left thigh. He is in a seated posture. The left leg is bent and the right leg is hanging. He is red complexioned as rising sun (Bāla sūrya).

### **Desika :**

*Sṛitattvanidhi*<sup>74</sup> again gives another form—Desika. The lord is represented as an universal teacher who teaches Siva, his father, the meaning of the Pranava. The lord is single faced, six handed, two of which carry the sakti while others, the akshamāla, the varada and the abhaya mudras. He rides on a peacock. Siva stands in front of Desika as a student.

### **Kumarasvami :**

The *Manasara* classifies this images as Sishyabhavamūrti.

*Kumāra Tantra*<sup>75</sup> portrays Kumārasvāmi as Vaṇṇipati (husband of Vaṇṇi) and one who appears before the devas as the radiant moon. He has four hands. And his right hands carry the sakti and the knife (asi) and in his left the kukkuṭa and the kheṭaka.

*Sṛitattvanidhi*<sup>76</sup> describes kumāra as four handed and single faced. He wears on his head the Karaṇḍa makuṭa. His left hands carry the varada and vajra while his right hands the śakti and the abhaya mudra. He wears the lotus garlands. He is young in appearance and is red in complexion.

### **Saravaṇabhava:**

Golden hued, luminescent and twelve eyed, the Devas and sadhus flock to worship Saravaṇabhava. *Kumāra Tantra*<sup>77</sup> further delineates Saravaṇabhava as holding in his twelve hands, the śakti, the ghaṇṭa, the dhvaja, the lotus (Sarasija),



the Kukkuṭa, the pāśa, the daṇḍa, the tanka, the bāṇa, varada and abhayamudra and the bow (Kārmukam).

Srītattvanīdhi<sup>78</sup> attributes six hands to this forms of Muruka, with single face, white complexioned, shining like a Bālasūrya. The lord is bedecked with ornaments. He has three eyes and is covered all over with sacred ash. In his six hands he carries, the pushpabāṇa, the sugarcane bow (ikshu Kārmukam), the khaḍga, the Kheṭaka, the vajra and the kukkuṭa. He is Sarajanma - born in Saravaṇa lake.

Hand Postures :

### Symbolism in Iconography

In the anthropomorphic representaion of Muruka the hands and the fingers are held in several positions to convey a message. This is called a mudra. The hand is known as hasta. The mudras in the cult of Muruka are no doubt limited and important among them are: 1) abhaya, 2) varada, 3) kaṭaka, 4) kaṭyavalampita, 5) daṇḍa or Gaja, 6) anjali, 7) sūci, 8) tarjani, 9) vismaya.

Abhaya is the protective hand. It protects devotees from fear or danger,

Varada is the hand that bestows boon.

Kaṭaka is the same as Simhākaraṇa and is a pose for holding an object. The fingers create a circle, thus resembling a lion's ear, hence the name Simhākaraṇa. Usually in this hand a flower is seen.

Kaṭyavalampita is the hand that rests on the hip, (kati) or upper portion of the thigh. The palm of the hanging arm rests on the loins. It is a posture of composure. The Sanskrit word "kaṭya" means a hollow above the hips.

Daṇḍa or Gaja is the hand that protrudes forward like the trunk of an elephant.

Anjali is the posture of prayer. Both the palms are brought together and uplifted the chest.

Sūci is the hand that indicates. Expect the index finger all others are held by the thumb.

Tarjanī resembles sūci but with one difference, the former is for indicating while the later is for just warning. The fingers in the case of sūci are held loose whereas in tarjanī they are held taut. Tarjanī hastās are seen in Dvārapālaka images. These are kept at the entrances to warn the worshippers from entering the sanctum without inner purity.

Vismayā is the symbol for expressing astonishment of amazement. This posture is also seen in Dvārapālakas.

### **Asanas :**

Seats and sitting postures of Gods and Goddesses are many. The seats are called pīṭhās and the sitting postures āsanās. The āgamas lay down definite measurements to be adopted for making these seats.

The most cōmmon seat is that of the Padmapīṭha or Kamalāsana. This is a seāt shaped like lotus flower. It is either circular or oval. All images under worship are generally seated in the Padmapīṭha. Bhadrapiṭha is another seat which may be circular or rectangular.

Kūrma pīṭhe has a oval shape with protruding heads and limbs of a tortoise. It symbolises pṛthvī tattva (earth principle), the four limbs and head representing the sense organs, withdrawal of which is necessary for spiritual advancement.

Simhāsana or Simha pīṭha is a throne - a seat of honour with four legs and with hand rest shaped like the figure of a lion. The seat may be circular or rectangular. Usually cala (movable) images when bathed are placed on Simhāsana.

**Ayudas (Weapons):** The images carry in their hands a number of weapons, birds and animals. These symbolise several eternal varieties. Several interesting variations are noticed in the representation of these weapons.

Aṅkuśa is the elephant goad or a hook. The sharp hook in the aṅkuśa will bring under control any rogue elephant. The implement stands for the control of ego in man. The destructive ego or selfishness is a deterrent factor for spiritual advancement.

Pāśa is a cord, chain, fetter, noose employed to bring to book erring animals. The God of death, Yama uses it in binding the prāṇa and pulling it out from the physical frame of a person. In the hands of the Gods and Goddesses it is kept to liberate the devotees from malas (impurities) which drown them in the sea of house-hold cares.

Saṅkha is the conch shell. Shank fishing in Pandya territory for over two millenium years is known from Tamil literature.<sup>79</sup> There are two varieties - the valampuri (with the twist over the left) and iṭampuri (with the twist towards the right); the former being a rare species. Valampuri chank is the symbol of Lord Vishnu but Muruka also carries it. It symbolises the nāda (the sound) principle.

Cakra symbolises the cosmos in motion. In his aspect as a protective God, Muruka uses it to destroy evil and spread goodness in the universe. Evils and temptations often create an illusion of success and victory although ultimately they bring in their wake gloom. Cakra represents the destruction of the evils and the restoration of goodness in its pristine purity.

Kheṭaka is a shield. It is a defensive weapon used to protect the warrior while fighting. It symbolises the protection a devotee receives from Muruka during his campaign against adharma. Kheṭaka is square and sometimes circular. It has a handle in its rear portion to hold it. Emblems of Muruka are also engraved on its face.

Dhanu is bow. It is called also as cāpa, kārmuka, and Ishvāsa. Several varieties of them are seen in icons. The following three are the main variations: a) with one bending, b) with bends in three places and c) with bends in five places. Chro,

nologically the five-banded bow is an evolution of a later origin. Dhanu is considered as one of the āyudha puruṣa. Muruka carries also a bow made out of sugarcane, which is named as ikshu karmuka.

Tanka is the hatchet, an axe, a stone cutter's chisel. It symbolises the knocking away of mummala (three impediments) by persistent performance of pūjas to Muruka.

Gada is the club intended to strike the enemy. It is held by the deity in its right hand.

Kaḍga is a sword. It is represented with scabbard or without it. It may be single edged or double edged. Several forms of them are seen in icons.

Musala is a pestle (used for cleaning rice). Like chaff in rice all impurities in thought, word and deed of man are removed. Bāṇa is an arrow, a shaft, a reed. It is also named as śara, iṣhu, viśikha, kāṇḍam. Arrows are carried in a quiver placed at the back of icons and tied to the body by a belt or they are held in the palm. The bāṇa represents gñāṇendriyam (sense of wisdom) and karmendriyam (sense of duty).

Paraśu is a battle axe or hatchet indicative of God's strength. Hala is a plough. This instrument symbolises pṛthivi tattva, (earth principle) - the gross matter that brings about earthly miseries.

Araṇi is a piece of wood (of the sami tree) used in generating sacred fire by attribution. It symbolises Vedic sacrifice. Sūla is the trident symbolising three guṇās : rajas, tamas, and satva. It is taken out to purify the streets before the procession of the main deity commences.

Vajra is thunder bolt - the weapon of Indra said to have been formed out of the bones of the sage Dadhīci. It symbolises great power to destroy enemies. It is also called kuliśa, hrādi.

Sakti is a weapon resembling a spear. The three quadrangular blades are pieced together. It also symbolises gñāna

(wisdom) which drives asunder ignorance and makes the soul yearn for God. The āyudha also stands for the three states of energies (Śakti) the icchā, released by desire, the gñāna, the result of knowledge and the kriyā, that comes by learning and right action. Muruka received this weapon from his mother Umā.

Daṇḍa is a stick or staff. It is a symbol of authority and punishment. It is also a staff given to a twice-born (Dvija Brahmin) at the time of investiture with the sacred thread.

Darpaṇa is mirror. Before the introduction of glass a highly polished metal was used as mirror. Even to this day in Kerala Temples, glass mirrors are not in use and instead they still continue the tradition of using speculum. Mirror symbolises the māya and the duality in nature-the real and the unreal. The mirror held by icons is either oval or circular.

Akshamala is a rosary string of beads.

Padma the lotus and flowers like nilōtpala are also held in the hands.

Dvaja is a flag banner, standard, ensign, the external manifestation of the inner sanctity. As the flag rises above the shaft as it is hoisted so too the kuṇḍali, the primordial energy in man arises to the sahasrārs in the head.

Tomāra is club or a javellin for the vanquishment of ego in man.

Kukkuṭa is the cock, the chanticleer. Subrahmaṇya at the end of the war disintegrates Sura's body into its elements as nāda and bindu- cock representing the former and the peacock the latter. He converted the cock as his banner and the peacock as his vāhaṇa (vehicle).

Ghaṇṭā is a bell; symbolising the mantra svarupa of the God.

Kamaṇḍalu is a pitcher, a student's water pot. It has a spout through which water comes out. It is also known as kuṇḍika and symbolises apputattva (water principle).

Sruk and Sruva are laddles in use in offering ghee and other oblations in the sacrificial fire.

Cāmara is a chowrie used as a fly-flap or fan and is reckoned as one of the insignia of royalty.

Chatram is an umbrella and symbolises the protective nature of God.

Asi is knife indicative of the release from the cycle of births and deaths.

Visikha is a spade and stands for cleansing the devotee of his impure thought, word and deed.

## CONCLUSION:

This study on the forms of Muruka discloses that there is no clear cut definition of the forms. For instance Skanda in Sritattvanidhi and the same name in Kumara Tantra have two different descriptions. So is the case with other names. The verification of the forms of Muruka in the various temples in Tamil Nadu with texts may perhaps offer more light on the study of iconography of Muruka. Of all these forms, one emerged as the most popular amongst the Tamils—the form of Paḷani Āṇḍavar of Paḷani. He is two handed with one hand on his hip and the other holding a daṇḍa. The Muruka form at Tiruttani also is two handed with the right hand holding a Śakti and the left on the hip. Muruka, the darling of the Tamils has chosen perhaps to present himself with two hands and with redolent beauty and youthfulness. People throng his shrines on Kṛttika day and other festive occasions, for pūjas and they honestly believe that their prayers are answered. This emotional link of the devotees with Muruka for centuries has made a lasting contribution to the perpetuation of the religious ethos of this part of the country.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Muruku—Ahaṇāṇūru 22:11; 118:5; 28:16; 138:10; 181:6; 232:14; 272:13; 288:4.  
Puṛaṇāṇūru 56:14; 259:5.  
Aiṅkuṛuṇūru 245:3; 247:3; 249:2; 308:4.  
Kuṛuntokkai 362:11.  
Maturaikkāñchi 38. 181, 724.

Maṇimēkalai 14.

Tirumurukāṛruppaṭai 242:2.

Narṇṇai 34:11.

Paṭṭinappālai 37.

Dravidian Etymological Dictionary p. 331.

2. Thirumurukāṛruppaṭai of Nakkīrar also finds place in the 11th Tirumurai of Saiva Canonical Works. T. P. Meenakshisudaram, 1965, A History of Tamil Literature, p. 133.
3. Paripāṭal 3; lls. 23—54.
4. Paripāṭal 3; L. 49. The word 'vilaṇku' in the passage would mean remove, slay, throw, let pass;  
Dravidian Etymological Dictionary p. 372
5. 'enpa'—'so it said' indicates traditional paurāṇic accounts, Paripāṭal 3, l. 31.
6. Paripāṭal 9:12-69.
7. Paripāṭal 8:36—45.
8. Paripāṭal 8:1—10.
9. Paripāṭal 5:19—20.
10. Perumpāṇāṛruppaṭai 457—459.  
Tirumurukāṛruppaṭai 258—259.
11. Tirumurukāṛruppaṭai 256—259.  
Kalittokai 83:13—15.
12. Tirumurukāṛruppaṭai 253—255.
13. Paripāṭal 5:56—70.
14. Akaṇāṇūru 149:15—16.  
Paṭiṇṇupattu 11:6.  
Puraṇāṇūru 56:7—8  
Tirumurukāṛruppaṭai 81—82; 247.
15. Tirumurukāṛruppaṭai 55—58.
16. Paripāṭal 17:48—49.  
Paṭiṇṇupattu 11:6.  
Puraṇāṇūru 56:7—8.  
Tirumurukāṛruppaṭai 81—82, 247.
17. Silappatikāram 14:10

18. Tirumurukāṛruppaṭai 38  
Journal of the Madras University, Vol. XXXII, No. 1, July 1960, K. R. Srinivasan, Religion as revealed by early Monuments p. 172.
19. Tirumurukāṛruppaṭai 45—46, 59—61.  
Perumpāṇāṛruppaṭai 457—459.  
Patirruppattu 11:3—6.  
Akanāṇūru 59:10—12  
Kalittokai 93:25—26.  
Paripāṭal 5:1—7; 9:70—71; 14:18; 18:3—4; 19:101—103; 21:8—9.
20. Tirumurukāṛruppaṭai 43—44.
21. Tiru Vi. Ka., Murukan allatu Aḷaku;  
Singaravelu, Social Life of the Tamils, p. 103.
22. Xavier S. Thani Nayagam, Nature Poetry in Tamil, pp. 55—57.
23. Epigraphica Indica, Vol. XX, p. 6.
24. Dr. H. D. Sankalia, Archaeology of Gurjar, p. 216—217
25. 'Mayilūrti Murukavel Tātai', VII Tirumurai, p. 299, v. 390, 1. 2, Dharmapura Ātīnam Edition, 1964.
26. 'Caravaṇattān kai toḷutu', VI Tirumurai, p. 43, v. 1, Dharmapura Ātīnam Edition, 1963.  
K. R. Srinivasan, op cit, p. 173. He states that there are 40 references to Muruka in Tēvāram.
27. K. R. Srinivasan loc cit, p. 173.
28. idem.
29. The inscriptions belong to the period of Varaguna II who ascended throne in 862 A.D.
30. The Northern cave which is dated to 773 A.D. is contemporaneous with the Narasimha Cave at Anamalai.
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36. C. Sivaramamurti, 1962, *Early Eastern Chalukya Sculpture*, p. 12.
37. K. R. Srinivasan, op. cit, p. 173.
38. *Suprabhedāgama Paṭala* 44.
39. *Kumāra Tantra* op. cit p. 204.
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41. *idem*.
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43. *Silparatnam of Sri Kumāra*, 1961, Thanjavur Part II, p. 156.
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P. K. Shanmukhanatham (Ed.), Madras, p. 39... 'Cemmān makaḷait tiruṭum tiruṭan'.
45. *Srītattavanidhi*, p. 328.
46. *Kumāra Tantra* p. 19.
47. *Kumāra Tantra* op cit p. 20.
48. *Bhagavath Gīta*, X, v. 24.
49. *Kumāra Tantra*, p. 19.
50. *Srītattvanidhi*, p. 321.
51. *Kumāra Tantra*, p. 19.
52. *Srītattvanidhi*, p. 331.
53. *Kumāra Tantra*, p. 19.
54. *Srītattvanidhi*, pp. 327—328.
55. *Paripāṭal* 5:2; 8:101; 17:49.
56. *Kumāra Tantra*, p. 30.
57. *Kumāra Tantra*, p. 20.
58. *Srītattavanidhi*, pp. 324—325.
59. *Kumāra Tantra* p. 21.
60. *Srītattvanidhi*, p. 325—326.
61. *Kumāra Tantra*, pp. 21—22.

62. Sṛitattvanidhi, pp, 326—327.
63. Kumāra Tantra, p 22.
64. Kumāra Tantra, p. 22.
65. Kumāra Tantra, p. 22.
66. Kumāra Tantra, p. 23.
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72. Sṛitattvanidhi, p. 323.
73. Sṛitattvanidhi p. 328—329.
74. Sṛitattvanidhi p. 329.
75. Kumāra Tantra, p. 21.
76. Sṛitattvanidhi, p. 325.
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# Minakshi Temple

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The Mīnākshi Temple forms the nucleus of the city of Madurai. Its origin can be traced back even to the Caṅkam age. The subsequent growth of the temple into a complex dates probably from the days of kulasēkara Pāṇḍian (1190-1216 A. D.) of the Imperial Pāṇḍia dynasty and reached the present state under the Nayaks.

According to the legends, which speak of the origin of the temple, Lord Indra discovered the 'Swayambu Linga' in the Kaṭambā forest (Kaṭamba vanam) and installed it in the Indra Vimānā. Madurai kāñci<sup>1</sup>, Cilappatikāram<sup>2</sup>, Maṇimēkalai<sup>3</sup>, and the Tēvāram<sup>4</sup> hymns of Gāṇasambanthar provide evidence to the existence of the temple of Lord Siva at Madurai. With the sole exception of Gāṇasambanthar's Tēvāram<sup>5</sup>, all the other ancient Tamil literary works do not even mention the name of Mīnākshi, the consort of Lord Siva. Kallātam, a literary work of the 9th century A.D., refers to the Madurai Temple and narrates some thirty līlās (Tiruvīlaiyāṭal) of Lord Siva. The Tiruvīlaiyāṭal Purāṇams of Nambi and saint Parañjōthi have a detailed description of Siva's Sixty-four līlās. However, in all early works mentioned above including the Jesuit letters, the temple is called 'Cokkar', cokkanātar, Ālavāy Iṟaivan, etc. The name Sundarēsvarar or Mīnākshi is found only in later works. Nowadays, people are more familiar with the name 'Mīnākshi Temple' than the Sundarēsvarar Temple. This clearly shows the supremacy of the female deity of the temple.

A folk version prevalent among the people of Madurai indicate the primacy of the female deity at Madurai. It runs "Do you belong to Madurai or Chidambaram"? According to this popular tradition Chidambaram stands for the domination of the male in family, whereas Madurai signifies the supremacy of the female in wedded life. Such a social system in life has also been adopted in the temple worship too.

Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador at the court of Chandra gupta Maurya of third century B.C., says that the Pāndia country was then ruled by 'Pandaia', the daughter of Heracles<sup>6</sup>. The concept of Mīnākshi as the presiding female deity at Madurai would have evolved from this concept of the rule of the paṇḍia country by a woman.

According to the architectural features of the temple, the Sundarēsvarar shrine is not only ancient but also the main shrine of the temple complex. The garbagriha, the Artha mandapa and the mahā mandapa of Sundereswarar shrine are bigger than of Mīnākshi temple<sup>7</sup>. Eventhough called Mīnākshi Temple, it is very difficult to date at what time the name 'Mīnākshi Temple' has come into practice. However, we can trace, the popularity of its existence from the Nayak period.

It was probably because the Vijayanagar and the Nayak Kings were the worshippers of Amman (Mother goddess). They appear to have attached more importance to the Amman worsip than Appan worship. Eventhough the names Cokkar, Sōmasundarar, etc., appear to have been well established in the literary works of the Nayak days, the name Mīnākshi temple, though not found in literary tradition, is widely in folk version among the public prevalent from the days of the Nayaks.

Actually, the Madurai Temple complex consists of three main shrines, one dedicated to Lord Śundarēsvarar, another to goddess Mīnākshi and the third to Lord Cēvvantīswarar. The shrine complex of Cēvvantīswarar has become insignificant due to rare and occasional worship by the public.

The temple, in a regular, rectangle occupies the centre of the city in an area of 847 feet length east west, and 792 feet north south including the compound. The total area including the ādi street is 15.37 acres and 13.91 acres when excluded the ādi street.<sup>8</sup> The temple, which is not of a single structure; was not built by a single man in a given period of time. But it is of a combination of many structures erected from the days of the Pāndias (12th Century A.D.) to the present day. The temple has undergone many

vicissitudes due to the Muslim invasions. As a result new styles were introduced by the later Nayak Kings on the despoiled structures of the temple. They have also made new additions to the temple. At present one can see the combination of old and new in a particular monument. As a result vast change in the styles of garbagriha base, Vimāna, pillars, gōpuras, mandapas etc. came into being. The changing styles of the Pandia, the Vijaya Nagar and the modern age can be seen in the walls of the temple complex.<sup>9</sup>

The Sanctum garbagriha of Sundarēsvarar is a square structure of 33 feet on all sides. The base has a upapītam and an Athistānam. All the three outer walls of the garbagriha, excluding the eastern entrance, have goshṭa mandapa of projecting shrines, of Dakshināmūrti on the south Lingōdbhava on the west and Durgā on the north. This goshta mandapa was constructed by Kampalarāya Viruppaṇan in 1572-95 A.D.<sup>10</sup>

As per the legendary origin of the temple, the vimāna (Indra) of the garbagriha is supported by eight dikgajās (Elephants), each measuring 10-feet in height. The linga in the sanctum is known as Swayambhu Linga. According to the 'Madurai Tiruppani Mālai' and 'Tiruppani Vivaram', Kulasēkara Pāndian built the sanctum, the shrine of Atira Vīci Āṭuvār, the Antarāḷa, the Mahāmandapa and the frist prakāra compound wall. During 15th century A.D., Māvali Vānātirāyar renovated the Sanctum and the mahāmandapa. Visvanatha Nayak (1533-64 A.D.), renovated the Indra Vimāna and donated the villages Āthanūr, Tirukkānai, Pukavayal, Kāṭṭumēlaipparampu and Ilamanallur. During this period, Sirāmalai Cevvanti Mūrti Ceṭṭi covered the Vimāna with thirty-two pots of gold and renovated the mandapa also. Cevvanti vēlan, the second son of the above Mūrtti Ceṭṭi repaved the flooring of Sundarēsvarar shrine.<sup>11</sup> In the entrance of the Muha Maṇḍapa two Dvārapālās stand on either side. Next to that the Vallapagaṇapati and Subramanyar are found on two sides.

The shrine complex of Mīnākshi is smaller than that of Sundarēsvarar shrine. The sanctum is almost square in size

measuring 25 feet with an Artha Mandapa of 25×45 feet. In the meanwhile garbagriha entrance has Gajalakshmi panel. On the three outer walls of the garbagriha are three niches having three images, the Iccā Sakti, on the south, the Kiriya Sakti on the west and the Gānā Sakti on the north. Two four handed Dvārapālās are at the entrance of the Artha Mandapa. In the Sanctum, a Paḷḷiyarai (a bed chamber) and the shrines of Vignēs-varar and Subramanyar had been built.

According to Tiruppaṇi Mālai, the Sanctum of Mīnākshi has been built by Kulasēkara Pāndian. Māra Varman Sundara Pandian-II (1238-51 A.D.) constructed the Sundara Pāndia Mandapa (Mahā Mandapam). He is also said to have built the second prakara outer wall with two tiered Colonnade Mandapa along the second prakara of Mīnākshi and Sundarēsvarar shrines on the southern side. During 15th century A.D., Māvali Vānātirāyaṛ renovated the sanctum of Mīnākshi and constructed the mahā mandapa, the paḷḷiyarai and first prakāra compound wall.

Sirāmalai Cevvanti Mūrtti Ceṭṭi covered the Vimāna of Goddess Mīnākshi with gold during the Visvanātha Nāyak period (1533-44) viṛappa Nāyak in 1572-95 A. D. paved the floors of Mīnākshi shrine, provided steps to the paḷḷiyarai and erected the door of Mīnākshi Temple. Vijayaranga Cokkanātar (1704-32 A.D.) constructed a decorative 'Andi-Room' in the Paḷḷiyarai of Mīnākshi sanctum. Thus beginning from the days of the Pandiyas, the Mīnākshi Shrine appears to have got the royal construction and renovation from the Pandias down to the Nayaks.<sup>12</sup>

The shrine complex of Cevvantīsvarar Temple is constructed by the brother of Kallūr Maṅrai Tiruviruntān Cevvanti in 1603-23. Cinna Cevvanti of the same period constructed the Sannati Mandapa and the compound wall of the temple.<sup>13</sup>

Apart from these three temple complexes, the Caṅkattār temple, the Kariamāṇikka Perumāḷ Temple, the Visvanātha shrine and a number of Īsvarams are notables in the temple. The Caṅkattār Temple is one of the oldest, having been constructed between 12th and 13th century A.D. It is in the northwest corner of Sāmi Sannati, where the images of

Caṇkam poets were installed. The Kariamāṇikka Perumāḷ Temple which is in the north of Sami Sannati in the second prakara, has no deity at present. In both the temples the original deities cannot be traced out<sup>14</sup>. On the western side of this prakāra, there are fourteen shrines in the name of 'Īsvaram'-all in a row close to the walls on either side of Palaka gōpura. Each has a garbagriha with a chamber in front corresponding to an Artha mandapa. They all belong to the later half of the 16th century A.D.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Gopuras :**

Excluding the two garbagriha Vimānās, there are thirteen gopuras—four outer gopuras and eight inner gopuras—of different tiers and height<sup>16</sup>. The last one is in the exterior outer end of Pudu Mandapa. It is an unfinished Raya Gopura, attempted by Tirumalai Nayak. The base of this gopura is nearly twice in size of east gopura, measuring 200 feet length and 120 feet width. The width of the entrance is 22 feet and the height of the pillar is sixty feet.<sup>17</sup>

All the outer gopuras are curved concave structure having stone base. The east gopura construction was started by Kulasēkaran and completed by Jaṭāvarman Sundra Pāndian in 1256 A.D. According to inscriptions, the gopura is named as 'Tirupuvana Cakkaravarti Kōnērin meykōṭṭān Cuntara Pāṇṭiyan Tirukkōpuram', and 'Tirupuvana Cakkaravarthi Kōnērin meykōṭṭān Avani Vēntarāman Tirukkōpuram'. The west gopura was constructed by Parākkirama Pāndian in 1323 A.D., the south by Sirāmalai Cevvannti in 1559 A.D., and the north by Krishna Vīrappa Nayak in 1564-72.<sup>18</sup> The north gōpura or Moṭṭai gopura which was incomplete till recent time, was completed by the Nāṭṭu koṭṭai Chettiars. Among the outer gopuras, the most photographical and concave sloping one is the south gopura.

All the inner gopurās are having straight corner edges and they mostly belong to the Nayak periods. The Chitra Gopura with seven tiers in the line of Amman Sannati was originally constructed by Māravarman Sundara Pāndian<sup>19</sup>. But the present structure is attributed to Kāḷatti Mudali, son of Ariyanatha Mudali in 1570 A.D. It is also known as 'Muttaḷakkum

Vāyil or gopura'. Cinnappa Nayak in 1524-27 strengthened it with baffle walls. Sirāmalai Cevvanti Mūrti Ceṭṭi, Kāḷatti Mudali, Kumāra Krishnappa Nayak and Lingama Nayak renovated and repaired the Chitra gopura<sup>20</sup>. This gopura was perhaps the original and the main entrance of the Sanctum of Mīnākshi.

The Kaṭaka gōpura, on the western side of Amman Sannati, was built by Vira Tummacci (Tumpicci) Nayak—in 1570 A.D. According to Dr. D. Devakunjari the featurers of the stone base of this edifice may belong to the age of 13th to 14th century A.D. While Tiruppani Malai and Vivaram refer to the brick structure of this gopura as of a later age<sup>21</sup>. Both the Amman Sannati and Sami Sannati gopuras are dated between 13th to 14th century A.D. Tiruppani Vivaram says that the Amman Sannati gopura was built by Ānanda tandava Nambi in 1228 A.D, while Tiruppani Mālai depicts that it was bulit by his wife.<sup>22</sup>

Both Gopura, Nāyaka gopura and Naṭukkaṭṭu gopura are of the same style which may belong to 16th century A. D. <sup>23</sup> The gopura Nāyaka gopura which leads to Sami Sannati was constructed by Visvappa, where as the Naṭukkaṭṭu gopura by Cevvantimūrtti Ceṭṭi. The Naṭukkaṭṭu gōpura forms the passage between Amman and Sāmi Sānnati, opposite to Mukkuruṇi Vināyakar. Since the gopura is named after Mukkuruṇi Vināyakar gopura or Iṭaikkaṭṭu gopura.<sup>24</sup> Both have fine niche figures.

The Palaka gopura on the western entrance of Same Sannati is attributed by Mallappan in 1374 A.D. With reference to an inscription found in the gopura, Dr. A. V. Jayachandran tries to put the date of this gopura as 1530 A.D. Whlie Dr. Deva Kunjari identifies some of the pandian feature in the gopura belonging to 14th century A. D.<sup>25</sup> Cinna Moṭṭai gopura on the northern side of Sami Sannthi, which resembles gopura Nayaka gopura and Naṭukkaṭṭu gopura was constructed by Cevvanti vēlan.<sup>26</sup>

Though all the twelve gopuras have their own entrances leading to both of the sanctums. many of them are not in use. Entrance through the eastern outer gopura is considered



inauspicious due to the death of a person who committed suicide by protesting against the activities of the royal court. It was also a common faith among the public that the gopura is associated with 'Brahma hatti thōsa' (killing the creator) and so this entrance was not preferred. Entry through the Aṣṭasakti mandapa is conventional and is also considered to be the most auspicious one. The entrance of Palaka and Kaṭaka gōpuras are permanently closed end sealed. The Cinna Moṭṭai gopura is also not in use. The gopura Nāyaka gopura is not used for exit.

### **Compound walls and Colonnades :**

The outer compound wall of the temple around the Āḍi street was constructed by Tīrunōkku Aḷakiyar. Sankara Naga-  
rajan renovated the compound wall in 1584 A. D.<sup>27</sup> The 'Sundara Pandian Tirumati', a compound wall of Sāmi Sannathi second prakāra was constructed by Māravaraman Sundara Pandian-II. He is also responsible for the construction of Mīnākshi shrine's second prakāra compound wall too.<sup>28</sup> Both the first prakāra of Samai and Amman Sannati compound walls were executed by Kulasekaran<sup>29</sup> and Māvali Vānātirayar<sup>30</sup> respectively. The eastern walls and steps of Porāmaraiḱkuḷam have been constructed by Kuppai Āṇḍi<sup>31</sup>; and the other one around Cevvantisvarar by Cinna Cevvanti.<sup>32</sup>

This passage between Mīnākshi and Sundaesvārar shrines second prakāra outer wall was opened for throughfare by Cinnappa Nayak in 1524—27 A.D.<sup>33</sup> On all the three sides of the outer compound wall excluding the east, there are cloister mandapas; on the south, religious institutions and temple executive offices are there on the side of west milk society is being run with milchy cows; The residents of the side are the Sri Siruṅgēri Saṅkaia madam, the Madurai Icai Vēḷaḷar Nātacurak Kalaiṇar Caṅgam and Āgama Vidyā sālā.

The Ārumutta Mudali Mandapa in the south east of Āḍi street, constructed by Ārumutta Mudali in 1759—68 A.D.<sup>34</sup> has been converted into Tashiltar's office. The Tummacci Nayak Mandapa in the south west corner of Āḍi street, the work of Tummacci Nayak 1578 A.D., now houses the Audit office.

## THE GOPURAS

|     | Name of the Gupura                   | Height              |        | Location   | Entrance Height | Nos. of Sudai Figures | Kalasa Height |
|-----|--------------------------------------|---------------------|--------|--|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------|
|     |                                      | Width               | Length |  |                 |                       |               |
| 1.  | East Gopura (Raya)                   | 153'X66'X111'       |        | East   | 38'             | 1011                  | 9' 8'         |
| 2.  | West Gopura                          | 154'.6"X63'.6"X101' |        | West   | 33'             | 1124                  | 9' 8'.10"     |
| 3.  | South "                              | 160'.9"X67'X108'    |        | South  | 35'             | 1511                  | 9' 9'.9"      |
| 4.  | North "                              | 152'X66'.6"X111'.6" |        | North  | 35'.6"          | 404                   | 9' 8'         |
| 5.  | Chitra "                             | 117'X8'X78'         |        | East of Minākshi Shrine<br>Leading to Porāmaraiikkulam | 27'             | 730                   | 7' 6'.9"      |
| 6.  | Amman Sannati or<br>Vembattur Gopura | 40'.6" (Height)     |        | East of Minākshi Shrine                                | —               | 46                    | 2' 4'         |
| 7.  | Kaṭaka "                             | 64'.6"X28'.6"X50'   |        | West "   | 14'.6"          | 228                   | 4' 5'         |
| 8.  | Gopuranāyaka "                       | 66'X33'X42'         |        | East of Sundarēsvarar "                                | 20'             | 280                   | 4' 5'         |
| 9.  | Sāmi Sannati "                       | 41' (Height)        |        | " "  | —               | 36                    | 3' 4'         |
| 10. | Naṭukkaṭṭu "                         | 60'X33'X44'         |        | South of "   | 19'             | 112                   | 4' 5'         |
| 11. | Palaka "                             | 72'X31'X48'         |        | West of "  | 18'             | 340                   | 4' 5'         |
| 12. | Cinna Moṭṭai "                       | 71'X34'X45'         |        | North of "   | 20'             | 184                   | 4' 5'         |

The mandapa in the northeast of Ādi street was by Venkatēsa Mudali in 1772 A.D.<sup>36</sup> It consists of an independent structure with a raised platform of four rows of pillars; this mandapa has no walls. On the western side of the Ādi street, there are vinayakar Shrines numbering three—namely Arulmign Selvavinaḷagar and Arulmiku Sundara Vinayakar another without particular name—all enshrined in recent times facing east. In the north west corner of the same street, a Kalyāna mandapa has been erected in 1982. by the temple trust board at a cost of Rs. 66,000. There are two other shrines in the north Ādi street, one depicting Lord Siva under a kadampa tree worshipped by a saint and the other installed just on the eastern side of the north gopura in a raised platform. Five musical pillars, two on the west and three on the east of the inner entrance of North gopura are kept under iron bar protection.

#### **Cloister Mandapas :**

Among the cloister mandapas, the earliest one, as identified by Dr. A. V. Jeyachandran, is the 'Tirunatai Mālikai' a two tier mandapa on the colonnades along the second prakara of Mīnākshi and Sundarēsvavar shrines on the southern side. This mandapa is considered to be the work of Maravarman Sundara Pandian-II in 1238—58 A.D.<sup>37</sup> In the porṇamaraikkūḷam area, three colonnades with cloistered mandapas are found; the eastern one had been built by Kuppai Andi in 1572—95 A.D.<sup>38</sup>; the north colonnade by Perumal in 1533—58 A.D.<sup>39</sup> and the cloistered mandapa by Tittiyappa Cetti in 1565 A.D.,<sup>40</sup> and the south cloister mandapa with steps by Tarumappan Pillai and his son Appan Piḷḷai in 1572—94 A.D.<sup>41</sup>

Three cloistered mandapas in the corridors of Minakshi shrine's the second prakara supposed to have been the work of Virakrishnan, son of Virappa Nayak (North & west)<sup>42</sup>, and that the one in the south by Tittiyappa Ceṭṭi. Tittiyappa Ceṭṭi is responsible for the construction of the western cloistered corridor mandapa in the first prakara of Sundaresvar Shrine in 1565 A.D.<sup>43</sup> Two other Corridor Mandapas are identified, one by Virappa Nayak<sup>44</sup> and the other by Ceṭṭiyappa Nāyak.<sup>45</sup>

A number of separate mandapas both inside and outside of the temple, had been erected in different periods by different

persons. During the later days some additions and renovation works were also carried out in the mandapas. Among them the Kampattaṭi Mandapa, the Āyirakkāl mandapa and the pudu mandapa are sculpturally more important than others; they are the perfect examples of Nayak Sculpture.

The pudu Mandapa, a well known structure is situated in the eastern outer area of Raya gopura. It was the work of a famous Nayak King Tirumalai in 1623-59 A.D.<sup>46</sup> The length and width of it, is 330'X105'; and the height is of 25 feet. It forms a Central nave and two side aisles with four rows of pillars. The total number of pillars are 124. A low level platform on all the four sides looks like an 'Akali'. During festival times when water was collected into this area the mandapa looked like an island. But nowadays it is used as a colonnade and the sides of it are occupied by shop-keepers the four styles of pillars, -the decorative, the yāli, the iconographic and the portrait found in the mandapa are the specimen of Nayak sculptures. Ten Nayak statues from Visvanatha Nayak to Thirumalai with their Queens on five pillars. The eight warriors four each on horse and the yali, Rāvana who tried to lift Mt. Kailaya where Siva and His consort are seated, the Tirupurāntakar, the two Dvārapālas the marriage of Minakshi, etc., are worth mentioning among pillar sculptures.

During festival times, the images of Minākshi and Sundarēśvarar were taken to this mandapa. On the eastern side of this mandapa is the Vasantha mandapa. It has a round shaped trough like structure from where water is filled in for bathing purpose.

The Vira Vasantha Mandapa or Vira Vasanta raya Mandapa' immediately after the east Raya gopuram, leading to the Sami Sannati is the work of Muthu Virappa Nayak in 1608—23 A.D.<sup>47</sup> It has a central nave and aisle on either side. Nowadays it is fully occupied by shop keepers. The sculptures here like Rudra, Rudra Kāḷi, Kālahara Mūrtti, etc., are neatly executed which represent the Nayak Style.

Next is the Pēcciyakkā Mandapa or twenty-two pillar mandapa erected in 1658 A.D. by Piṭṭu Cokka Paṇḍāram who was an ascetic. It leads up to the entrance of Nayaka gopura.

On the southern side of this mandapa and the Vira Vasanta mandapa, a number of small mandapas have come into existence. The cērvaikkārar mandapa by Muthusērvai in 1771-77 A.D.,<sup>48</sup> the Muthurāmalinga Iyer Mandapa or Cittirai second day festival mandapa by Muthu Ramalinga Iyer, a minister of Sivagenga Samasthānam, the Kalyāṇa Mandapa or Cokkanāta Mandapa by Vijayaranga Chockanatha Nayak in 1711 A.D.<sup>49</sup> the Maṇakkōla Mandapa by Subbiar chief minister of Muthu Chellappa Sethapati) in 1842 A.D. and the Maṇi Mandapa by Vīrappa Nayak in 1572-95 A.D.,<sup>50</sup> are a few note worthy structures.

In front of the Maṇakkōla Mandapa, a portrait of the constructor is installed. The Mani Mandapa is also known as Kalyāṇasundara Mudaliar Mandapa. In the Muthuramalinga Iyer Mandapa, the Kāsi Visvalinga is enshrined in a temple. A portrait figure of Muthuramalinga Iyer with his wife is also carved in front of this mandapa. The Kalyāṇa Mandapa has foliated arches with wood carvings. A statue of Vijayaranga Chockanatha Nayak is on a pillar sculpture in front of the platform. A timbered hall is also erected in front of this mandapa by the Naṭṭu Kōṭṭai Cheṭṭiars. This reflects the modern craftsmanship.

Āyirakkāl Mandapa, on the northern side of Vīra Vasanta Mandapa is located on the north-east corner of Adi street facing south with 250 feet length and 240 feet width with 1029 pillars.<sup>51</sup> Among the pillars, sculptured are 24; Yāḷi 24; decorative 12; Others are ordinary pillars. The Mandapa has a central nave leading to the Naṭāra shrine (sabābati) with thirteen aisles on each side. On the east of this mandapa there lies a temple called Kāsi Visvanatha with a linga shrine in it. This mandapa is considered to be built by Ariyanatha Mudaliar, the great general and minister of the Nayak Kings even during the period of Vīrappa Nayak in 1572 A.D.<sup>52</sup> This Mandapa has two musical pillars to its credit on either side of the entrance.

Entering into the Sāmi Sannati's second prakara through the Nayaka gopura, one comes across a number of madapas mostly in the eastern side. The Kampattati Mandapa, the Nāyaka Mandapa or Hundred pillared mandapa, the Gāṇa-sambantar mandapa, the Ārāycci Mandapa, the Dvārapāla Mandāpa

and the Virappa Mandapa are all erected in the eastern side of this prakāra.

Kampattati Mandapa has been built by Virappa Nāyak in 1572-95 A.D.<sup>53</sup> Two flag Posts are found in it. one is probably erected by Cevvanti vēlan in 1533-64 A.D.<sup>54</sup> and the other which is comparatively taller was by Virappa Nayak. Tirumalai Nayak is credited with plating the paḷi-piṭā and the flag staff of both Minākshi and Sundarēsvarar with gold.<sup>55</sup> This mandapa, known as Kotikkampa Mandapa, Sundarēsvarar mandapa, and Dvajasthamba mandapa is situated between Gopura Nayaka gopura and Sannati gopura. Eight magnificent monolithic Pillars around the Nandi shrine and the two flag posts have the carvings of twenty-five murtams of Siva. These remains the ideal examples of Pillar sculptures with iconographic features. In addition to these, four other statues of Urdhva Tāṇḍavā, Kāḷi, Aghōra Virabhadra and Agni Virabhadra facing west towards the Sāmi shrine are the best specimen of the Nayak sculptures. The Navagraha and the Saṭṭaiyappar shrines are in the northern side of this mandapa next to the Nandi shrine. The Nandi shrine with the eight monolithic pillar sculptures are considered to be the work of a later period.<sup>56</sup>

The hundred pillared mandapa by Cinnappa Nayak in 1524-27 A.D.<sup>57</sup> is in the north east corner facing south in a high platform. It has seven aisles with a Sabāpathi temple at the end where the Natarāja stone idol is well Carved. In front of it is a small four pillar mandapa and the Patañjali and Vyākrapāta images.

Just opposite to the hundred pillar mandapa, there lies the Gāṇasambantar mandapa, built by Virappa Nayak in 1572 A.D. It is on the south east corner of this prakāra facing the north.<sup>58</sup> Four images of the famous Nāyanmārs are housed in it. In the front the King's portrait sculpture with his minister or son is engraved. Next to this mandapa on the western side is the Ārāycci mandapa by Thalavai Ariyanatha Mudaliar in 1564-72 A.D.<sup>59</sup> The Dvārapālās mandapa by Perumal in 1533-58 A.D.<sup>60</sup> and the Virappa mandapa by Virappa Nayak in 1583<sup>61</sup> are found between kampattati mandapa and the Sami Sannathi gopura. The vāhana

Arai by Kōnāri Nāraṇan brother of Accarāyan in 1690-73 A.D.<sup>62</sup> is also one of the striking features in the eastern side of this prakāra.

Virappa Nayak has constructed the Mūrtti Amman mandapa in the south west corner in 1572-95<sup>63</sup> This mandapa is used to keep perambulatory icons of Somaskanta and Mīnakshī. The Gaṇapurusha mandapa in the north colonnade of this prakāra is the work executed by Timmappa Nayak in 1558-60 A.D.<sup>64</sup> The Caṅkap pulavar mandapa and the Caṅkap pulavar Ulāmandapa in which the Kadampā free coated with silver are the existing mandapa in this prakāra. Next to that on a higher platform, lies a big mandapa called kūṭṭu vaḷipāṭṭu Mandapa or Tiruppukaḷ mandapa. Cellappan alias Māṇikkam was the person who carried out the construction work of this mandapa in 1563 A.D.<sup>65</sup> Recently, that is on 10-2-85 the Kalyāna Śundarēsvarar Vighraha ( the marriage scene of Mīnakshī-Sundarēsvarar with Tirumāl ) is enshrined and the mandapa is called as 'Kalyāna Sundarēsvarar temple' A Tiruvampalam on the north west corner along the outer compound wall of this prakāra, a work of Māravarman Sundara pāndian-II is also notable feature in this prakāra.<sup>66</sup>

When we enter into the second prakāra of Sāmi Sannati' through Nāṭukkaṭṭu gopura, we come across Āṇḍa Vināyakar Mandapa on the wall. This mandapa which is known as Mukkuruṇi Vināyakar mandapa was built by Kantappa pēttu -Ceṭṭi in 1659-82 where the Mukkuruṇi Vināyakar shrine is installed. This is one of the fine specimens in a big sized Vināyakar.<sup>(67)</sup>

The Kariamāṇikka Mandapa is on the north corridor of Sami Sannati's second prakāra which was commonly Known as 'Kariamanikka Temple' It is believed that Abishka paṇḍāram took down the front mandapa of this and re-erected it as Sankilī Mandapa.<sup>(68)</sup> But, we do not know which mandapa is erected back to the Amman Shrine.

In the first prakāra of Sāmi Sannati, we are able to see the Sixty-three Nayanmārs mandapā. It is the work of Ariyanatha Mudali in 1564-72 A D.<sup>69</sup> During the period of Tirumalai Nayak- Gūṇanaprakāsa Pandaram constructed the wall around it, and a

mandapa on the south west corner facing the east.<sup>70</sup> A series of Sixty-three images representing the Nāyanmārs are housed in the Nāyanmar mandapa.

Kaṅkalanātar is on the west and it was built by Tittiappa Ceṭṭi in 1564-72 A.D.<sup>71</sup> The Durga Mandapa, a work of Ariyanatha Mudali is in front of the Deva goshṭa on the northern side of Sundarēsvarar garbagriha wall.<sup>72</sup> Vaṇṇiyaṭi Naṭarājar Mandapa in the north east corner of this prakāra was executed by Cellappaṇ in 1563 A.D; Ariyanatha Mudali is said to have installed the Murugesha shrine in it.<sup>73</sup>

In the shrine complex of Mīṇākhi, first comes the Nagarā Mandapa in the east facing the Ashṭa Sakti Mandapa. It is also known as 'Mēḷa vātya Mandapa', and 'Accaya Mandapa said to have been built by Kāmāttam Accayrāyam minister of 'Ran. Maṅgammāḷ in 1690-703.<sup>74</sup> Once it was used for storing the Vāhanās, but at present it houses fruit shops, etc. The practice of playing Nādaswara band is being continued even to-day at about 5 O'clock in the early morning and evening. The statue of Maṅgammāḷ with her grand son is engraved on a pillar sculpture in the entrance of this mandapa.

The Ashṭa Sakthi Mandapa is also known today as Ashṭa Lakshmi Mandapa. Nowadays, it is used as a main entrance to the temple. Rudrapati, a Servant maid of Tirumalai Nayak's Palace is responsible for the construction of this mandapa. Tiruppaṇi mālai refers to this as 'Tōḷi Ammāl Aṟai.'<sup>75</sup> In front of this mandapa, is a high portrait with a large tower over and two smaller towers on either side. There are the two stucco figures of Gaṇēsa and Shanmuga facing east is on either side of the entrance. At the western end of this mandapa, are two fine stone iconic sculptures of Mahā gaṇapati and Shanmuga facing east, which resemble the two sculptures as seen in front. A colonnade of two rows of pillars having eight Ashṭa Sakthi iconic sculptures four in each side is found inside.

Next to the Ashṭa Sakti mandapa, is the Mīṇākshi Nayak mandapa by Samūkam Mīṇākshi Nayak in 1704-32 A.D.<sup>76</sup> The length of it is 130 feet which leads to Amman Sannati and ends



with Chitra gopura. It consists of six rows of pillars with a central nave and two aisles on either side. Two fine sculptures facing opposite is considered.

Mudali or Mudali piḷḷai mandapa is the work of Kaṭantai Mudali in 1613 A.D.,<sup>77</sup> and it is in between chitra gopura and the north-east corridor of porāmaraiḱkuḷam. It is popularly known as Dark mandapa which has six pillar sculptures, three in each side. Five of them are identified as the Bhikshāṭana Miṭhini legend and the last one, probably, the portrait of the donor.<sup>78</sup>

Entering through the south gopura one can find out the Kiḷi kaṭṭu (Kaṭṭi) Mandapa on the western corridor of the Porāmaraiḱ kulam. A number of mandapas with independent architecture have been built in this area, but most of them do not exist to-day. The Mūrtti mandapa by Tiruvampala Ceṭṭi in 1562 A.D.,<sup>79</sup> the vasantha Mandapa by Ramappa Nayak in 1623-59 A.D.,<sup>80</sup> the Caṅkili Mandapa by Timmappa Nayak in 1558-60 A.D.,<sup>81</sup> the Cevvanti Mandapa on the side of Kaṭṭara Kaṭṭan Kuṛaṭu by Cinna Cevvanti in 1608-23 A.D.,<sup>82</sup> and the Nandi mandapa by Kampalārāya viruppaṇan in 1572-95,<sup>83</sup> have been destroyed later. It is possible to conclude that they might have been removed when the Kiḷikkāṭṭu mandapa was in existence. The Kaṭṭara Kaṭṭan kuṛaṭu by Timmappa Nayak<sup>84</sup> and the Virappan kuṛaṭu by Virappa Nayak<sup>85</sup> had built the platform on either side of the Visvanatha shrine in the Kiḷikkaṭṭu mandapa.

Of all the mandapas, the Kiḷikaṭṭu mandapa is famous for its ornamental type.<sup>86</sup> This mandapa is popularly known as Paṇḱa pāṇḱavar mandapa. On the basis of ten pillar sculpture representing the pandavas, siva as a hunter, Draupati, purushāmr̥ga, Vāli and Sugr̥hivā. It is also called as 'yāḷi mandapa' and Koṭṭaimuttu mandapa. In front of the Amman Sannathi gōpura two Dwarapālās stand in this mandapa. Opposite to this, the madappaḷḷi, last of Naṭukkaṭṭu gopura which was built by virappa Nayak, known as Cokkar madappaḷḷi.<sup>87</sup> The Arumugam temple by cevanti vēlan,<sup>88</sup> and the Viśālākshi-Visvanatha shrine by Appan pillai<sup>89</sup> are notable structures in this mandapa. The Mangammal mandapa, a projecting one on the west of porāmaraiḱkuḷam, the Mutarly mandapa and the

Eṇṇaikkāppu mandapa (uñjal mandapa) also occupy the Western side.

In the shrine complex of Mīnākshi, the Tirumalai Nayak mandapa lies on the south east corner of the second prakara, where as the Kolu mandapa is on the western side. Another one, the Tirunāṇḍ mandapa came into existence on the south west corner, built by Kampala raya viruppaṇan.<sup>90</sup>

The Annakkuḷi mandapa, just west of the outer gopura, is one of the most important among the mandapas. In it, there is a series of four mandapas where an elementary school was once run. There are four large elephants, four yāḷi pillars, and two figures of Brahma and Vishnu on pillars. The fourth one has eight monolithic pillars having the figures of Cauri bearer, pandian king, Vyāghra pādā, Brahma, a Queen, a King, patañjali and vishnu. These figures are identified as the participants of the marriage of Mīnākshi and Sundarēsvarar.<sup>91</sup> But to-day the mandapa is completely removed, and we cannot even trace the remnants of them.

A folk story is associated with this mandapa; it is about a gundōtarā who came to attend the marriage of Mīnākshi-Sundarēsvarar. He was heavily fed by putting the eatables in a very big pit in the mandapa. When he felt thirsty, he was asked just to put his hand in his mouth, from where the vaikai river is said to have taken its origin. Tiruppaṇi mālai states that this mandapa was built by Cellappeṇ in 1563 A.D.<sup>92</sup>

The mīnākshi Temple Complex has lengthy history from the pandias of the Caṅkam age. More incidents have been added in the story of history. But it reached its Magnificence during the Nayak rule. They were responsible for the Most of the construction of Mandapas, prakāras, cloistered shrines and independent structures. The architectural beauty as revealed in the Southern gopura, the Thousand pillared Hall and the Kampattati Mandapa is the remarkable achievement of the Nayaks. Many of the purāṇic and legendary tales found their iconographic representations in this period. Except for the erotic sentiments and featu-

res expressed through a few portrait as well as sculptures, have art-devine history with them. Though the Sundarēsvarar shrine, representing the male supremacy of the ancient age, is the earliest one, the Mīnākshi shrine is the popular one. This deity represents the female primacy in the Pandia empire.

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3. Maṇi : 1:54
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6. Allan Dalquiste, Megasthenes and Indian Religion, p 69
7. The area of Amman Sannati, i) Sanctum : 25'×25'  
ii) I prakāra 124'×70' iii) II prakāra 225'×150'  
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10. The name Kampalaraya Viruppanan is known as 'Kampalaray Mahipati'-ref., Dr. Devakunjari, R., 'Madurai Through the Ages', P. 228.
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# **Adorning Sculptures of Gopuram with Special Reference to Thanjavur Big Temple**

**Dr. G. Deivanayagam**

Gopuram is different from that of Vimanam. Vimanam is the tower which is raised upon the sanctum sanctorum. The Gopuram is the tower which is raised upon the entrances of the temples. Almost all the Vimanams are pyramidal, cylindrical or oblong in shape, but the Gopurams are elongated towers of many storeys. Both these structures are small sized and are of brick work in the early periods. The pallavas and the cholas made grand and of granite.

When the towers were raised with many tiers it looked great and big. But in this structural method the look or appearance of the tower would not be so appealing, because it has nothing but storeys, pillars, lintals, windows etc. In order to make it impressive, sculptures were carved on the outer sides of the towers. So the purpose of the sculptures of the Gopurams were nothing but of beautifying and of space filling.

Most of these sculptures were carved on the projecting outer parts of the pillars, lintals, windows etc. It should be the clever idea of the sculptors of those days who happened to cut off the projective unnecessary parts of the building stone parts changed in to fine sculptures.

Sometimes, some of these sculptures were placed as ornamented pillars which bear the weight. Instead of placing, the plain pillars, they were carved as fine sculptures. By this method the chola period achieved not only the structural purpose but also the beauty of the Gopuram and the mode of instruction also.

In pallava and chola period almost all the sculptures of the Gopurams are of the different forms of the Gods like



Siva, Vishnu, Brahma and their Goddesses. It has been adapted in the period of Nayaks and Maratha and also, even now it is being followed.

If it is a Siva Temple, mostly the images of Siva like Alingana, Agora, Rishaba, Sugasana, Chandrasekara, Sundara, Kangala etc., were placed in the eastern side and the western side by the images of Vishnu say as Maccha, Kurma, Varaka, Narasimha, Vamana, Parasurama, Rama, Krishna, Kalki etc.

South side is for the image of the Dhaksnamoorthy and the north is for Brahma.

Erotic sculptures were included among this sculpture of Gopurams only in the period of Nayakas in Tamil Nadu. Most of this sculpture are seen of mortar works.

Sculptures made up of mortar is the speciality of the nayak period. Instead of carving it has been made in that period. Even the puranic sculptures were also depicted in order to instruct sex education. Krishna who concealed the dress of the Gopikas and made of fun of them while they were bathing is being depicted as sculptures of mortar on the western side of the Keralantaka Gopuram.

The size of the sculptures of pallava and chola are comparatively smaller than the gigantic forms of the Nayaks. On the look itself we can infer that the early kingdoms were preferred the life in structures and the Nayaks liked them in gigantic figures only.

The sky scraping Gopurams were the formations of the Nayaks. According to their sizes the adoring sculptures of the towers were also formed.

In pallava Gopurams, very few sculptures are seen. In Chola, sculptures were formed in the apt places. But in the Nayaks performances, all over the Gopuram are seen with the crowd of sculptures.

We can classify sculptures into three major class as

1. Sculptures of the base form
2. Sculptures of the tiers
3. Sculptures of the spaces.

Sculptures of considerable sizes are placed in the base forms. Comparatively small but attractive sculptures are placed upon the tiers. The space filling sculptures are of different sizes. The class first sculptures are mostly of the principal deities like Siva, Vishnu, or their Goddesses or the Gods of the eight directions. Mostly they are placed in separate niches or Deva Koshtam. The external surface of the Gopurams adorned by the sculptures of the second variety. This kind is possibly of the different forms or incarnations of the main God of the temple. Different forms of Siva are usually placed in Siva Temples and different forms and incarnations of Vishnu are placed in Vishnu Temples.

The space filling sculptures mostly the figures or sages, Yogins, Door Guards, women in Chola period (in their performances). But in the Nayak periods the class second sculptures are placed on all over the Gopuram, depicting some puranic scenes like the 63 plays of Siva, 10 Avatars of Vishnu, stories about Indra, and devotees.

Besides these figures, the forms of architectural element are also well shaped in attractive manner seen upon the Gopurams. Koorai, Yala Virisikai, Koodu, Kabodam, Kodunkai, Eluthavam, Karna koodu, Kumba pancharam, Patrasalai mada pancharam. Salaram, podikai Thula, Vari, Thiranai, Puruvam etc. The accessory parts of the architectural elements of Gopurams developed in time are also adorning it.

The Trispear shaped visikai seen upon the Koorai of pallava Gopuram were transformed as the face of a yali in chola and the fan like canopy in chola period to form the Yala virisikati.

The Kurai itself is designed as elongated, round, four sided, octagonal, and with designs of patches called padam or pathakkam or Medhani.

The karnakoodus are always formed in the two brims of the towers, these are the miniature forms of some vimana with kalasam. Only one form of karnakoodu is used all over the tower. One above the other with some interspace and in a line form these structures made the tower glamorous. Most of the karnakoodu are having single kurai and single kalasam.

The Kumbapancharam a kal emerges from a pot with floral wreathes and celestial beings are mainly used in the wall space between the pillars on towers called 'Salai' as an adoring form. In the early period like pallava, such forms are not used in the Gopuram. It is none but later cholas or 12th century who developed Kumbapancharam into different beautiful forms in their constructions like Ralarajeswaram of Darasuram and Kambakareswaram at Thirubuvanam etc.

The sculptures formed on the surface of the tower and are all mostly seen as the modified figures of the pillars. But a very little or them actually stand for bearing purpose. Most of them are carved to be such bearers and actually not serving this purpose. Hence why, there raised a proverb in Tamil as "Kopuraththe pommaya Thankuthu?"

Separate figures like "Koorai thankiyar" were also seen on the towers. They are the sculptures of poses of Guards who bear the weight of the Koorai on every 'Thalam'. They may be in sitting or standing posture and single or double on each side of the Koorai.

Such sculptural beauty of the Gopuram can be seen all in one of the Keralanthakan Gopuram of Thanjavur Big Temple as follows.

### **The appearance of Keralanthake Gate Tower**

The main gate of Rajajeswaram Temple of Thanjavur stands Commemorating the Victory, valour, and devotion to Lord Shiva of Raja Rajan. This name Keralanthagan was given to him, in recognition of the first victory won by him, in his expedition against the Cheras. The meaning of this honorific term is that he was yama to (Kerala) Cheras.<sup>1</sup>

The main gate with its Gopuram is situated as the Fort entrance. This is otherwise called "Thorana Vayil" (Festoon gate).<sup>2</sup>

The basement of this gate measures 96 feet in length and 45 feet in its breadth, and has the shape of an oblong.

The floor is made with an artistic skill. On the upper part there is a 'yalavori'. The walls that are supported by pillars have 'kodungai'. Yalavari, palagai (plank), and lintal parts. In this strong floor part, there are fine Kudus (pigeon holes) are along the south-North direction. This gopuram has front portion, bent downwards in the shape of an elongated circle.

The genesis for the formation of this Gopuram by the artisans and masons in the days of Raja Rajan are:

- 1) The small Gopuram in the front part of Ellora Temple.
- 2) The borders of Bhima chariot in Mahabalipuram.
- 3) The small Gopuram in the entrance to the Kanchi Kailasanathar Temple.<sup>3</sup>

All these are of the similar model. Adopting this model, at a height of 90 feet from the ground level with the required size, with five floors, Keralanthaga Gate required size, with five have been built by the Chola artisans.<sup>4</sup>

This entrance to the Gopuram is  $16\frac{1}{2}$  Feet broad and 26 feet tall. The single stones  $3\frac{1}{2}$  ft, by 26 ft. that stand on either side as frames for the door way is one that astonishes the visitors that see it. On either sides of the door way there are chambers for the stationing of the body guards. Called as "Keralanthaka Terinte Vasel Meikappalar."

### **The upper storey**

The five tiers of the Gopuram gradually dwindle in size upto the fourth and the fifth floor the crown for the Gopuram. The entire Gopuram is a stone art structure.

For each of the platforms, anterior and posterior to it gate ways are formed at the east and west side. As the Gopuram

is fully terraced by the artists the inner circle expands and reduces itself as it proceeds upwards. By this device, the full weight of the Gopuram falls on the border door frames in the lower entrance.

### **The Ancillary constuctions**

The ancillary construction lends grater strength to the Gopuram in its appearece of majesty. In the centre of the first floor area of the Gopuram the ancillary Gopuram on either side North and South facing the entrance of the same shape. They have been made as a single floored platform with a small entrance. The shape of this ancillary Gopurpm resembles that of Kanchi Kailasanathar entrance Gopuram.<sup>5</sup> This kind of Thorana Vayil Gopuram is the first experiment in this art for the development of the Chola Gopuram-Construction work.

Every one of the tiers of the Gopuram is provided with 'salai' "kabodam" with pillars and "Koodus". In between them there exist wide heads and the divine images one after the other in succession.

These stone figures are in embossed form. The upper part is embellished with white lime paste to present a polished appearence on the east and western parts at suitable places, Shivas divine figures' and Thirumal figures are found.

### **The border of empossed art**

The central portion of the five floors of the Gopurma that go up one of the other have the entrance, and the brim above the entrance is in a permanent shape as, 'koraí'. They from one third of the width part. This art is an antiquoted chero art coming down from ages. The Vadakku Nathar Temple in Tiruchur, has its Gopuram constructed in this similar model.<sup>6</sup>

### **Koodu (Pigeon holes)**

The slant front face of the koodu that form part of the gopuram are similar to those found in Mamallapuram (Rock cut Temples) varai Thaligal the hill shrines with the Pallava art. In the centre parts of these pigeon holes, small crowns, surrounded by beautiful creepers in fine workmanship are seen. This building construction

in its perfect art, seem to resemble finesse found in the Budha Vihars of the Pallava reign.<sup>7</sup>

In each and every floor of the gopuram, in their peripheral parts the floral wreaths of the creeper design are provided. The circular borders of the "virisikai" (Prabai) made by the artist, adds majesty to the gopuram. These frontal work in that are provided at the appropriate spots, in a prominent form of elevation, with elegant creeper wreaths around them in a vertical post entrances its magnificence. The artisans of the days of Raja Rajan, have handed the art structure in their fine efforts, providing to the circular "Virisikai" (fan like canopy) in their middle parts with yali facets earns them a unique place of honour in this art.

### **Yala virisikai (Yala Fan top)**

The upper part of the gopuram is called the "Mudi" (crown) and also called "Kurai Kattu" The top of the (Mudi) crown, on Keralanthaha Thiruvayil possesses the appearance of an elongated crescent looking downwards.

It is to be specially mentioned with appropriation and felicity of the perfection, the artist has exhibited in the north and south front spaces which are filled with "Prabavali" and "yala virisikai" that come out with a prominence. The formation of the "virisikai" that gives prime beauty to the head of the yali (Lionogriff) from whose mouth on either side the growth of artistic creepers in the shape of a semi circle, is a splendid performance of the art which goes by the name of "yala "Virisihai". It has to be taken as an improvement to the yala virisihai that we see on the single floored gopuram on the entrance of the Kanchi Kailasanathar Temple built during the days of the Pallava king Raja Simha Pallava. It requires circular in shape with its top elegance that have the resemblance to the same construction, find in the side front of the Buddha Vihars.

Professor Dureil, who has done his research of the art in the temples of Tamil Nadu, is of the opinion that the basis or inspiration for this art has been given by the shapes of the front parts of Ganesa and Beema and chariot we have in Mahabalipuram.<sup>8</sup> The

(thiri sulam) Triple spear, appear with prominence on the top of the Virishai in the stone temple of Mahabalipuram. This seems to have also given due incentive to the construction and the special features that entrance the Yali face, with Triple spear fashion device adopted in the Keralanthaha Thiruvayil of Tanjore Big Temple.

### **The Novelty in Pudaipu Koorai**

On the top portion of the temple gopuram, on the horizontal side, one third of the length is made with tentacle like borders bending downwards on the stones.

The border prominence is made on the Salara gates (windows) one on the other of the fine platforms. The work has been done in accordance with the shape of the gopuram tapers up and this adjustment gives special beauty to the art. The unaltered mode of the making of the temple gates, to its shape even now in vogue in Cera Nadu, deserves, a comparison. The mode prevailing in Cera Nadu, in the temple construction art is that they are made up of wood, laid with square bricks and covered with copper or brass plates that are in two or three layer forms.

As an advanced improvement on the antiquated gopura gate construction art, adopting the layer formation of the Cera gate work, imbibing the layer art therefore to suit the taste of the south Indian the gate of Keralanthahan has been created by the artists of of Tamii Nadu substituting granite stones in place of the wood in Cera Nadu. Every window is provided with a platform on which the support for the stone pillars rest. Starting from these support pillars, the holes are carved out as shelves. On either sides of the gate "Dwara Balagar" statues are carved as guards at the gate. The statues standing one in front of the other. These guard sentry figures are single or double according to the space of the floor area. These figures are so designed as to depict them as though they are supporting them on their sholders with hands bent and raised above the head. This is peculiar to the days of Raja Rajan in the construction of the front part of the gate

Thus the east and west side, frontage have the figures of the gate sentries bearing the 'kurai'-the roof of the gopuram, the guards looking robust with strong sinews vividly made visible to look at. The gopuram gets still pleasing to sight with the eastern front part. In between the interspace (salai) the pillars are decorated with the figures of Siva Moorthy and other idols of gods for a gracious sight to see.

### **Decorative sculptures**

On the eastern part, the dancing Kali, Oorthava thandava Sivan, Ganesar, Murugan, Shiva and Uma, the four faced Brahama the two gate keepers, the 2 roof bearing guards adorn the structure.

In the second floor, Kalyana Sundareshwarar, embracing moorthy, Vinayaka, Murugan, the two gate sentries the roof bearing figures, two on each side, are engraved.

In the third floor four gate keepers two on each side, the roof bearers, kala Bairavar, Gaja Samhara Moorthy, occupy the space.

In the fourth layer of the window space, besides the three Siva Moorthy's on each side the two sides are having twin gate sentries.

The fifth floor is the (Roof) lower berth forms the neck of this crown. The artists term this as "Greevam".<sup>9</sup> The window door ways have sentries one for each side, standing erect with pride.

Next on the western part Sakthi on the north and Shiva on the south give a beautiful appearance in their comfortable sitting posture. On the two edges at the brim of the corners roof carriers one on each side are found in a pose of carrying the stage of their shoulders. On the first floor of the western part we see the figures of the shepherd women whose robes have been secretly robbed by Kannan and placed with a mischivou's look on the branches of Kurntha tree. This picturesque scene is beautifully made with the 'Sudhai', art of the Nayaks times. Brahma and Tirumal and 2 roof carriers are also depicted.



In the second floor, Narasimha incarnation in the act of subduing Iraniyan takes an important place. Two roof carriers are on each side, and two for each gate that are four in number are presented in their position of bearing the roof.

In the third floor at the Koodus, Thirumal in his standing poses are made. Two gate keepers and two roof bearers are seen. All have depicted as roof carriers.

Thirumal sculptures in his standing poses are depicted in the fourth floor. Two gate keepers are also visible. The fifth floor presents the sculptures of Siva on his Rishaba Vahanam with his consort and Thirumal in his sitting posture along with Devi Lakshmi. Two giant sized roof bearers on either side, carrying the two corners of the roof are shown. The two gate keepers are also there.

Mada Pancharam that appears with grace is seen in the long roof with the "yalā Mukappu" standing on high legs at the western peak. This gives an attraction to the construction. The imaginary invention of the artist in producing this scene is one for appreciation. The holes "Koodu" provided to the stone temple gopurams is a poignant addition to the building construction art. Besides their function of filling up gaps the holes give prominence to the artistic front construction. We have to arrive at the conclusion that these front Koodu holes, have been made on the basis of the windows of the Buddha vihars.<sup>10</sup>

This "Koodu" provision that has acquired perfection by the imaginary genius of the artists were so designed to contain structural figures and for prabai which are the protruberent circular front part of the gopuram. This can be claimed with pride that the Chola art has gained its zenith.

Above the additional upper shrine for Muruga the images of Brahma are seen all over the North and above the shrine for Heramba Ganapathi, the images of Dhakshinamoorthy are seen.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

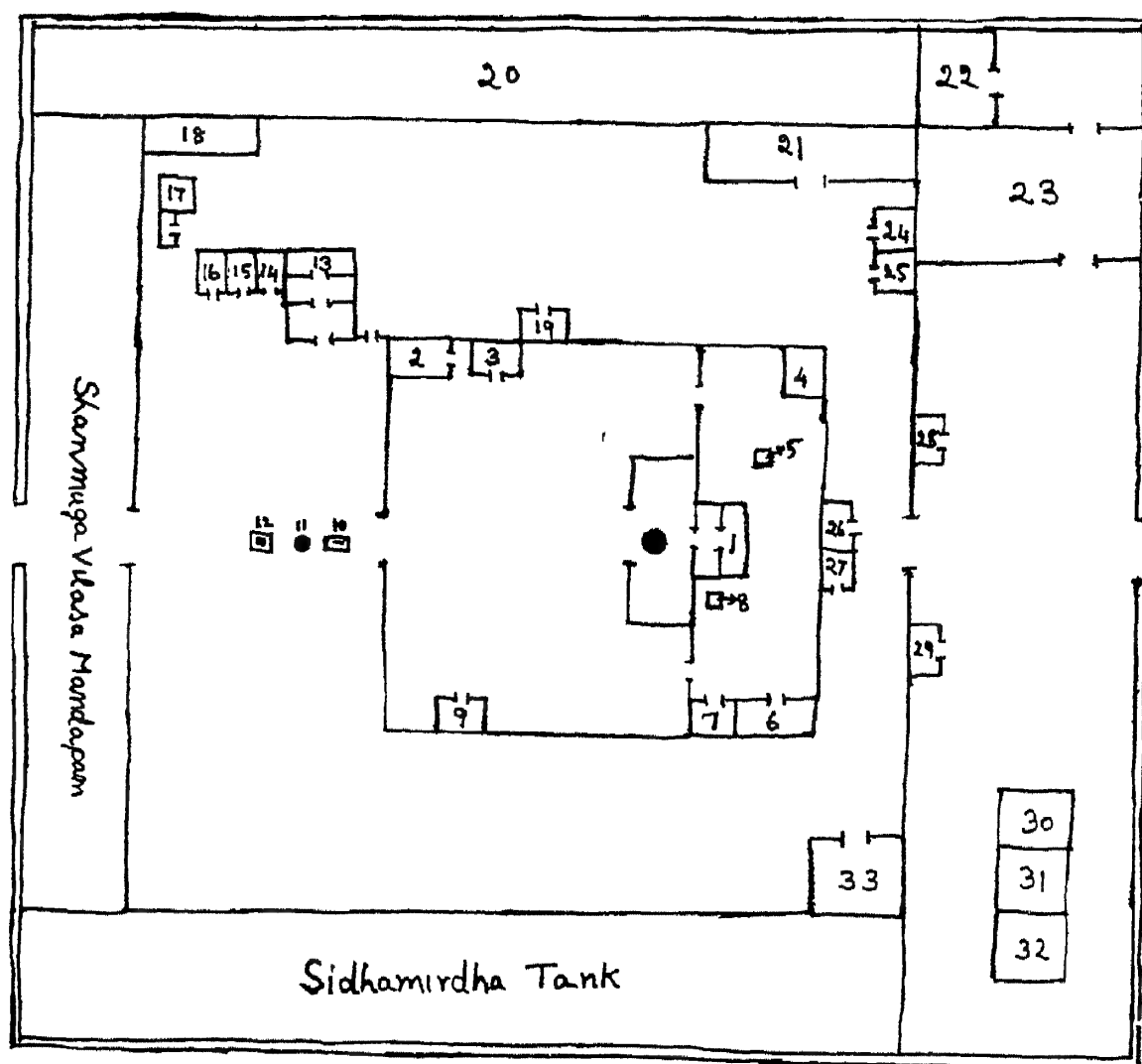
1. H.L.C.P. (History of the Later Cholas by T.V.S. Pandarathar Tamil).
2. M C.P. P. 17, (Middle chola Temple by. S R. Balasubramaniyan).
3. A.I., pp. 76, 91, A.T., R 21.
4. Packrisamy Pillai, Tanjore and Big Temple p. 8.
5. P. Arc, P. 13 (Pallavas Architecture by Alexandar Rea)
6. A.S.T.K, P. 204 (An Architectural survey of Temples of Kerala by H Saṅkar)
7. P. A. Vol. II P. 20, Burgess, Indian and Eastern Architecture Vol. I, pp. 126, 336
8. P. A. Vol. II, p. 20.
9. H.T. Vol. I, p. 196 (The Hindu temple by Stella Kramrisch).
10. I.A., PP. 36-38 plate (Indian Architecture - Buddhism and Hindu Periods by Percy Brown).



# SRI VAIDYANATHASWAMY TEMPLE

VAITHEESWARAN KOVIL

(Not to Scale)

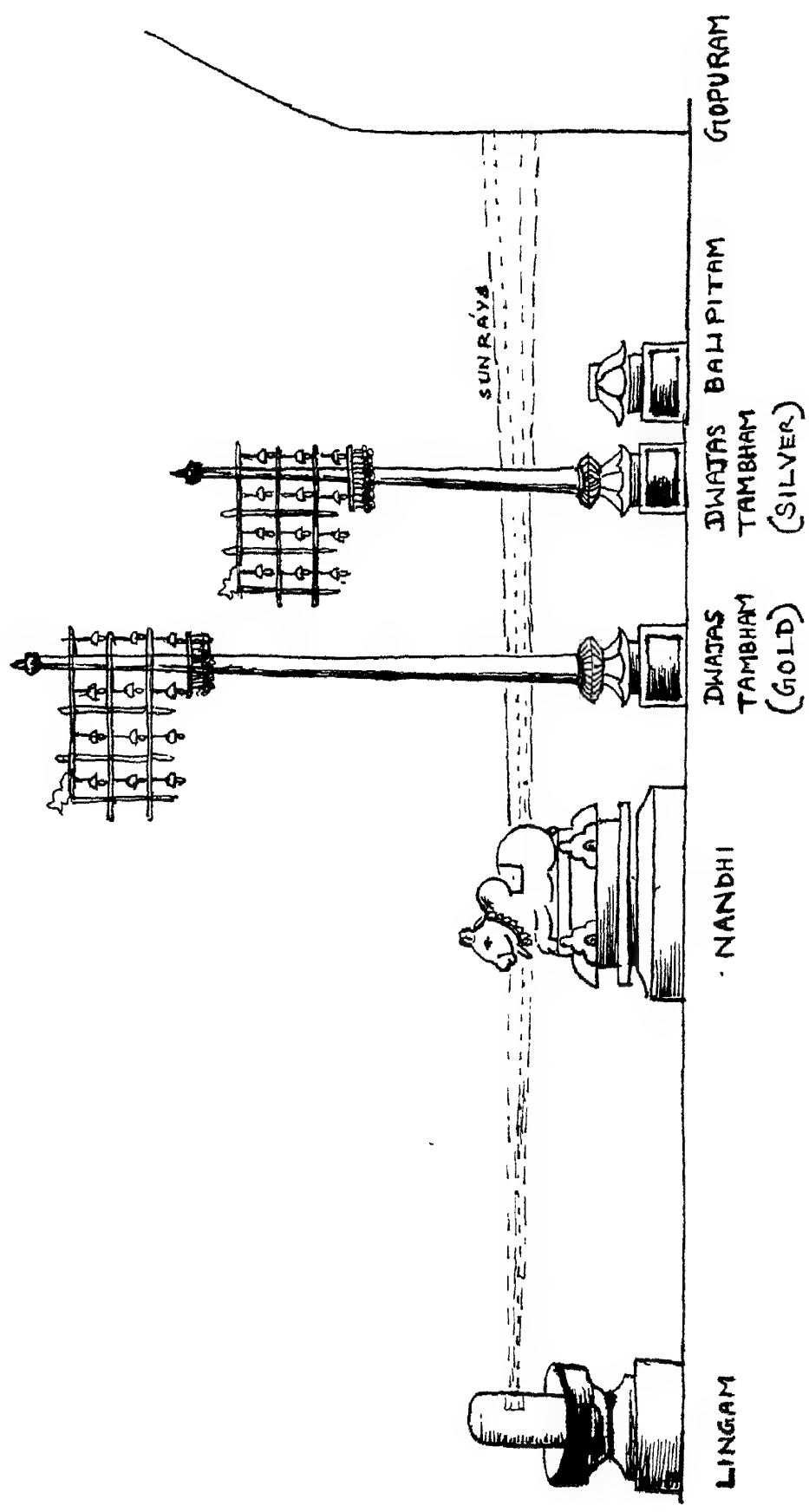


Explanations in P. 2

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| 3. Koothapiran                    | 14. Sharmugai, Valli & Devayanai | 25. Lecture Hall            |
| 4. Navagruhas                     | 15. Vinayagar                    | 26. Dhandayuthapani         |
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| 6. Sixty-three Nayammars          | 17. Asthanamandapam              | 28. Kshethra Bhuvaneshwarar |
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| 8. Rakshinamurthy                 | 19. Bhadra Kalammam              | 30. Vigneswarar             |
| 9. Somaskandhar                   | 20. Garden                       | 31. Adhi Vaidyanathar       |
| 10. Nandhi                        | 21. Library                      | 32. Chandikeswarar          |
| 11. Balipeedam                    | 22. Store Room                   | 33. Madapalli               |

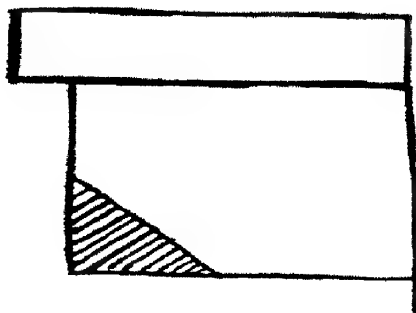
**VAITHEESWARAN KOVIL**



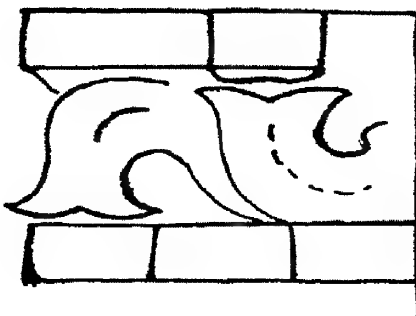
# CORBELS CHARACTERISTIC OF THE DIFFERENT PERIODS

PALLAVA  
A.D 600 TO 850

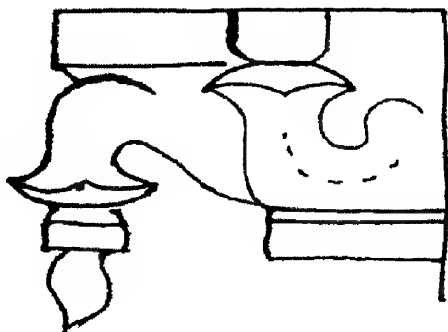
EARLY CHOLA  
A.D 850 TO 1100



LATER CHOLA  
A.D 1100 TO 1350

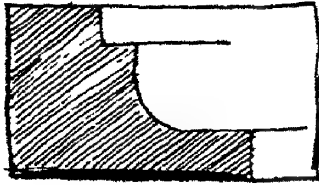


VIJAYANAGAR  
A.D 1350 TO 1600

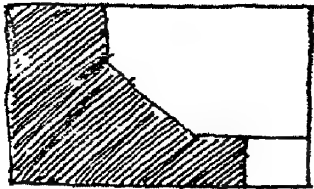


MODERN

# HISTORY OF THE BODIGAI

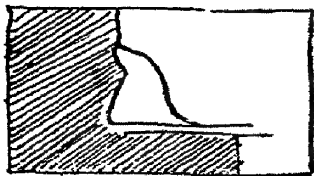


SADA BODIGAI  
(PALLAVA)



SADA BODIGAI  
(EARLY CHOLA)

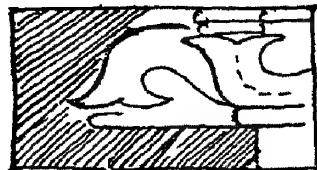
SADA BODIGAI  
(EARLY CHOLA)



TARANGU BODIGAI  
(LATER CHOLA)



TARANGU BODIGAI  
(LATER CHOLA)



TARANGU BODIGAI  
(VIJAYANAGAR)



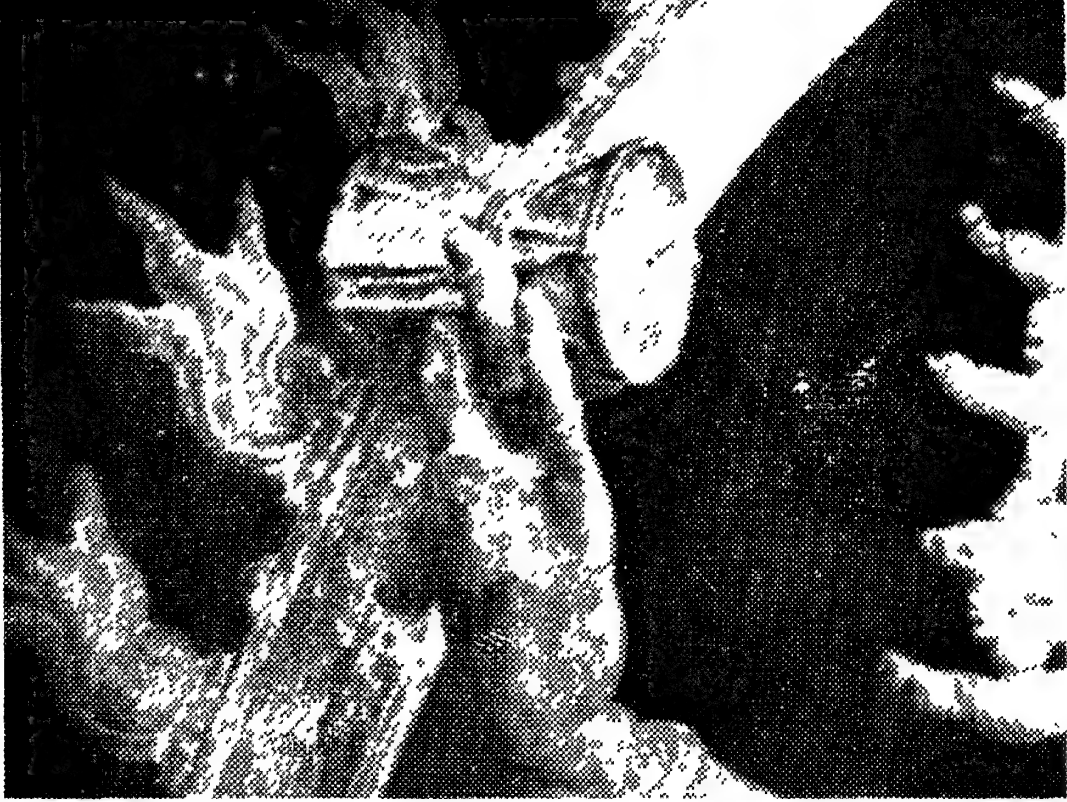
PUSHPA BODIGAI  
(MODERN)



PUSHPA BODIGAI  
(MODERN)



## கோவிலும் இசைக் கருவிகளும்



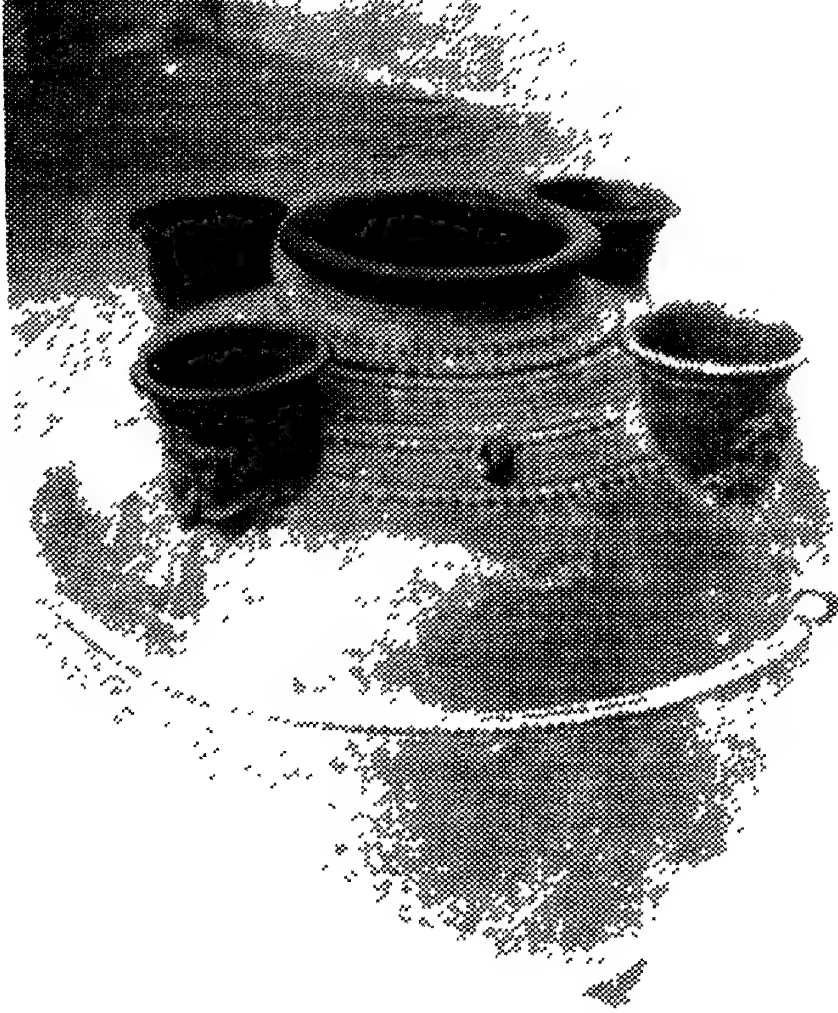
ஆடவல்லான் உடுக்கையைக் கையில் ஏந்தியிருப்பது,  
ஆடவல்லான் செப்புத் திருமேனி — சோழா காலம்  
9-ஆம் நூற்றாண்டு.



ஆடவல்லான் ஆட ஒருமுகம் உடைய குடமுழா வாசிக்கும்  
நிலையில் உள்ள சிற்பம் — சடையார் கோயில் — திருச்  
சென்னம் பூண்டி — சோழா காலம். 9-ஆம் நூற்றாண்டு.



குடமுழா — ஐந்து முகம் உடையது  
இசைக்கும் நிலையில் உள்ள சிற்பம்  
நிருத்த சபை — சிதம்பரம் கோயில்  
12-ஆம் நூற்றாண்டு



குடமுழா — எழுத்துப் பொறிக்கப்பட்டது  
அ. மி. ஒளஷத புரீஸ்வரர் கோயில்  
திருத்துறைப்பூண்டி  
தஞ்சை மாவட்டம்



சிவபெருமான வண்ண வாசிக்கும் நிலையில் சிற்பம்  
சோழர் காலம் 10-11 ஆம் நூற்றாண்டு.



வீணையை ஏந்தியிருக்கும் பெண் -- நாயககா காலம்.  
18-ஆம் நூற்றாண்டு --- சிதம்பரம்.



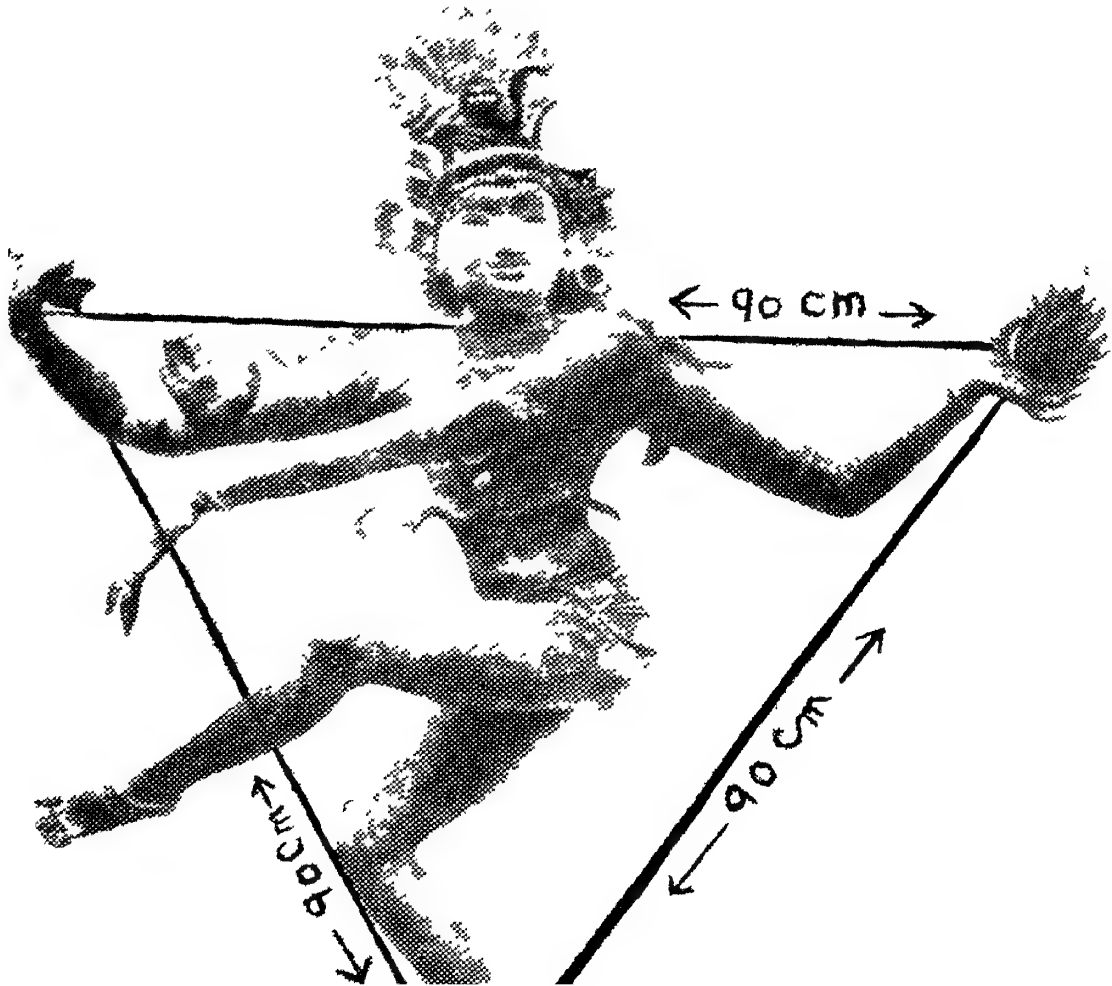
சங்கு ஊதும் பூத கணம்  
9-10 ஆம் நூற்றாண்டு  
சோழர் காலச் சிற்பம்  
சோழபுரம்  
தஞ்சை மாவட்டம்



மததளம் அடிக்கும் சிவகணம்  
சோழர் காலம்  
இரண்டாம் இராசராசன காலம்  
தாராசுரம்  
தற்பொழுது தஞ்சை கலைக் கூடத்தில் உள்ளது



# **A Multi-Faceted study of Nataraja**



**Tiruvalankadu Nataraja**



**Natesa**  
(Leg Reversed Dance)  
Poruppumettu Patti,  
Madurai District  
About 10th century A.D



Nataraja  
Kankoduthavanitham  
Thanjavur District  
About 13th century A D



Natesa  
Velankanni  
Thanjavur District  
About 10th century A D



**Natesa**

Okkur Thanjavur Dt.  
About 9th century A. D.



**Natesa**

Kuram, Chengalpattu Dt

About 9th century A D.

# Bharata-Natya

## Images in the Temples of Tamil Nadu

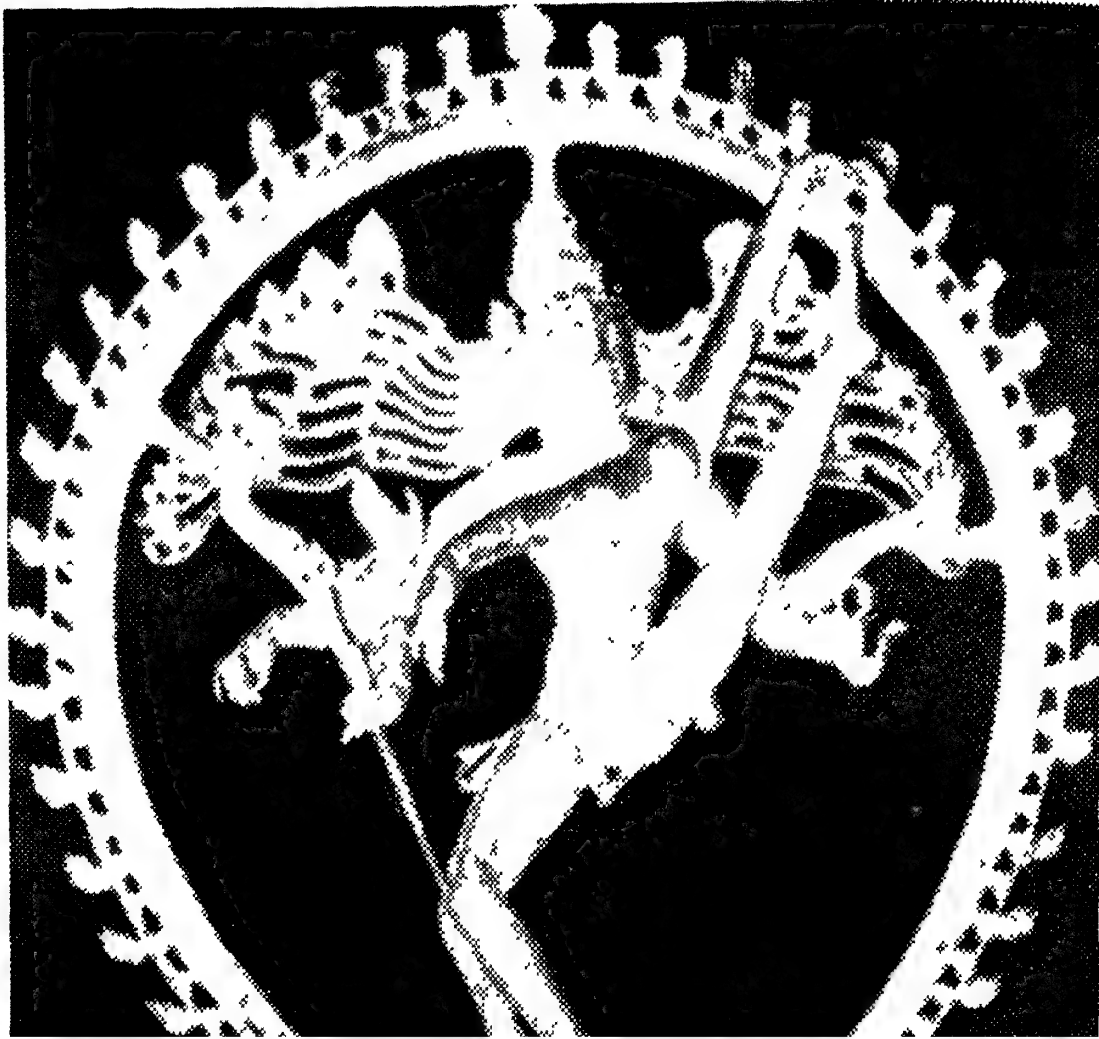


Dancer, Gajahasta Pose, Painting  
9th century A.D Pāṇḍya  
Sittannavāsai



Natarājā, Bronze Image  
10th Century A. D. Chola





Natarājā, Bronze Image  
Early Chōla, Tiruvālangādu



Svastikarechita Karana  
11th century A D Chola  
Brihadisvara Temple, Tanjāvur



Bhujaṅgatṛā Sita  
and  
Ūrdhvajāna Karanas  
11th century A. D. Chola  
Brihadīśvara Temple, Tanjavūr



Ghūrṇita Karaṇa  
11th century A. D. Chōla  
Brihadesvara Temple, Tanjavūr



Vidyudbhrānta Karana  
12th—13th century A.D.  
Chōlā Sarangapani Temple  
Kumbakonam



Argala Karana  
12th-13th century A. D. Chōlā  
Sārangapāni Temple  
Kumbakonam



Sakatāśya karana  
12th-13th century A. D. Chola  
Sārangapani Temple  
Kumbakonam





Lalātatilaka Karana  
12th-13th century, A. D. Chola  
Sarangapani Temple  
Kumbakonam





Dancing girl  
C A D. 13th century. Chola-Kāḍavarāya  
Amman walls, Dēvi shrine  
Nataraja Temple  
Chīdambaram



Dancing girl  
C A D. 13th century Cholā-Kāḍavarāya  
Amman walls, Dēvi shrine  
Nataraja Temple  
Chidambaram

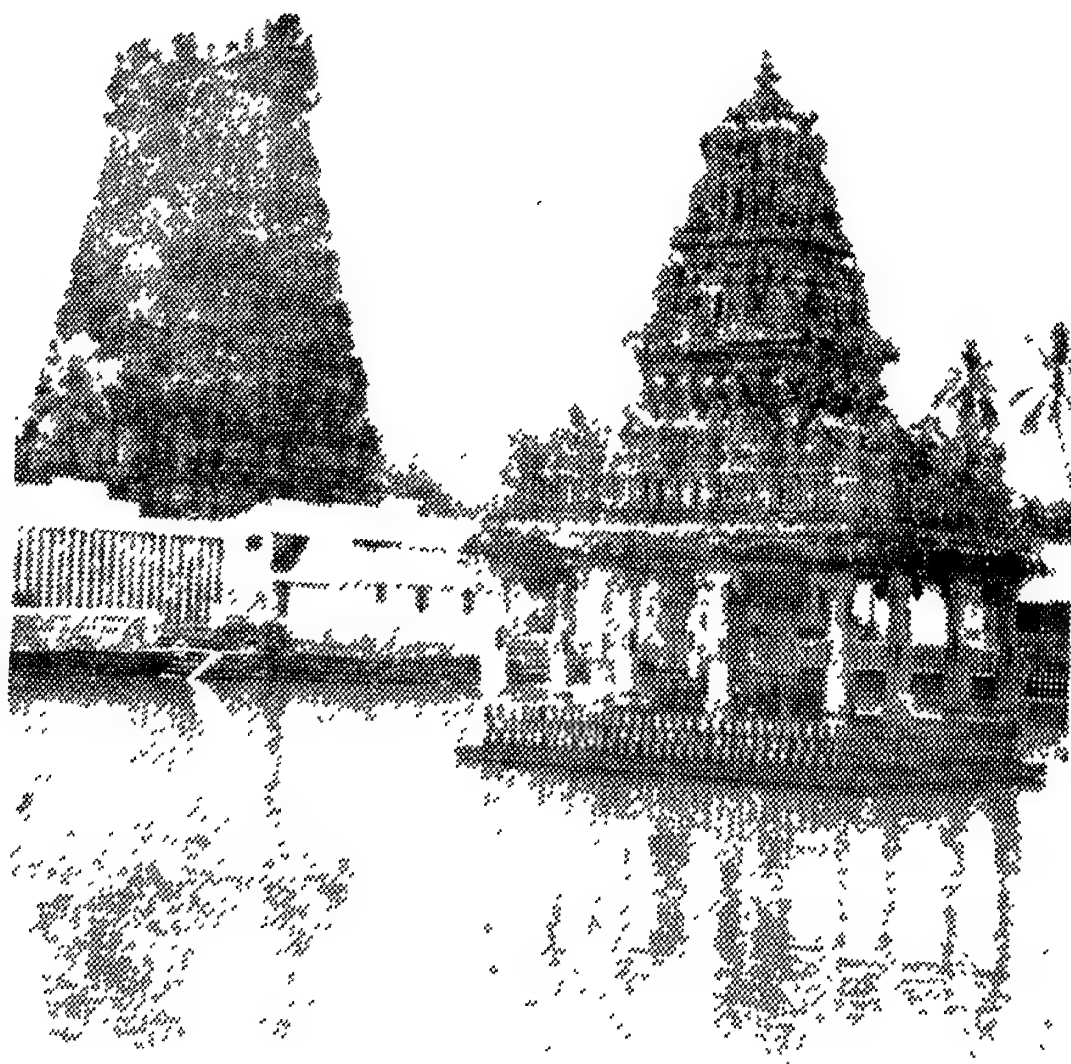


Karana Poses,  
South Gopuram  
C. A. D. 15th century  
Vriddhagiriśvarar Temple  
Vriddhāchalam

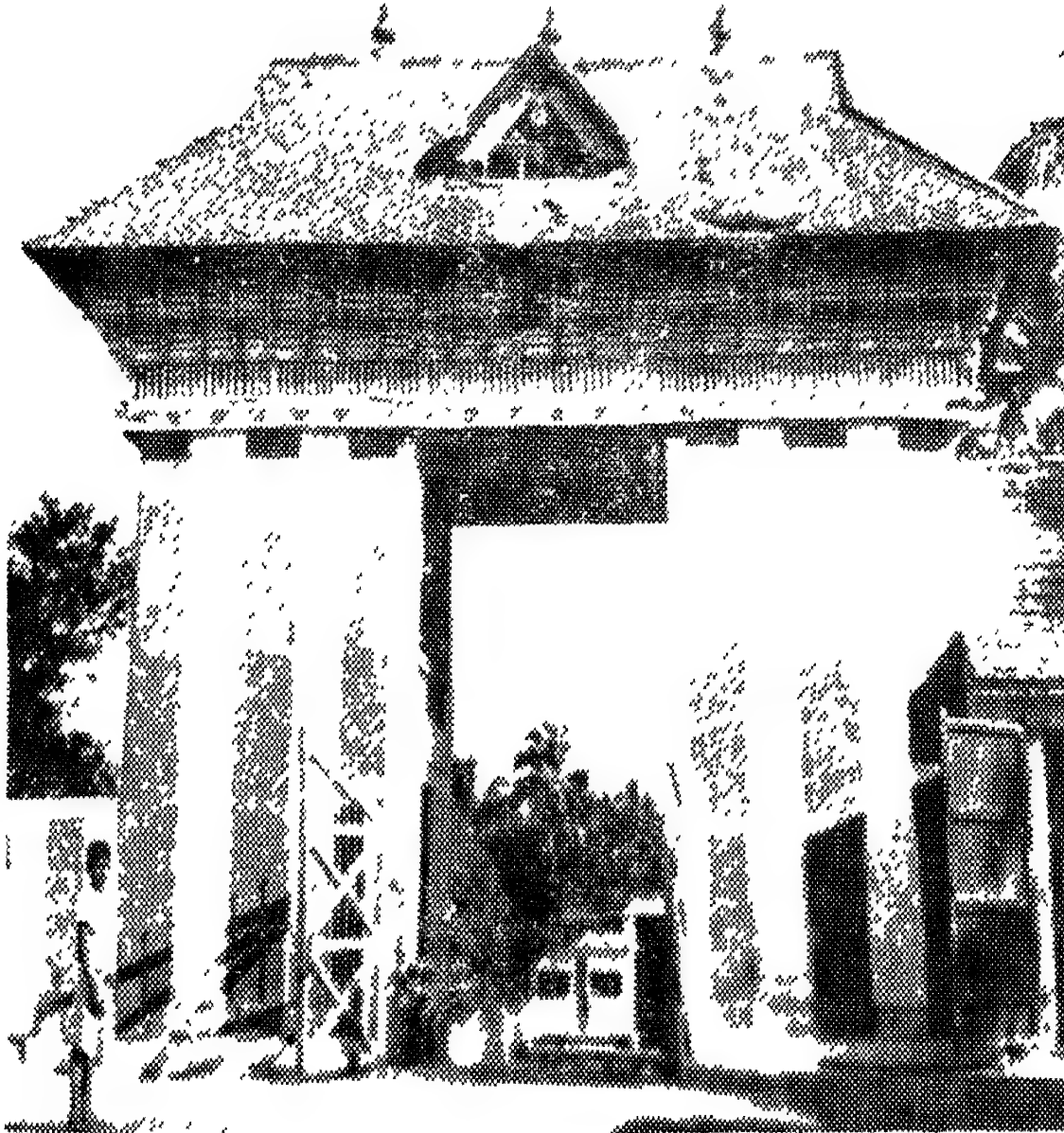


Karana Poses  
South Gopuram  
C A. D 15th Century  
Vriddhagirisvarar Temple  
Vriddāchalam

# Temples of Kanyakumari District

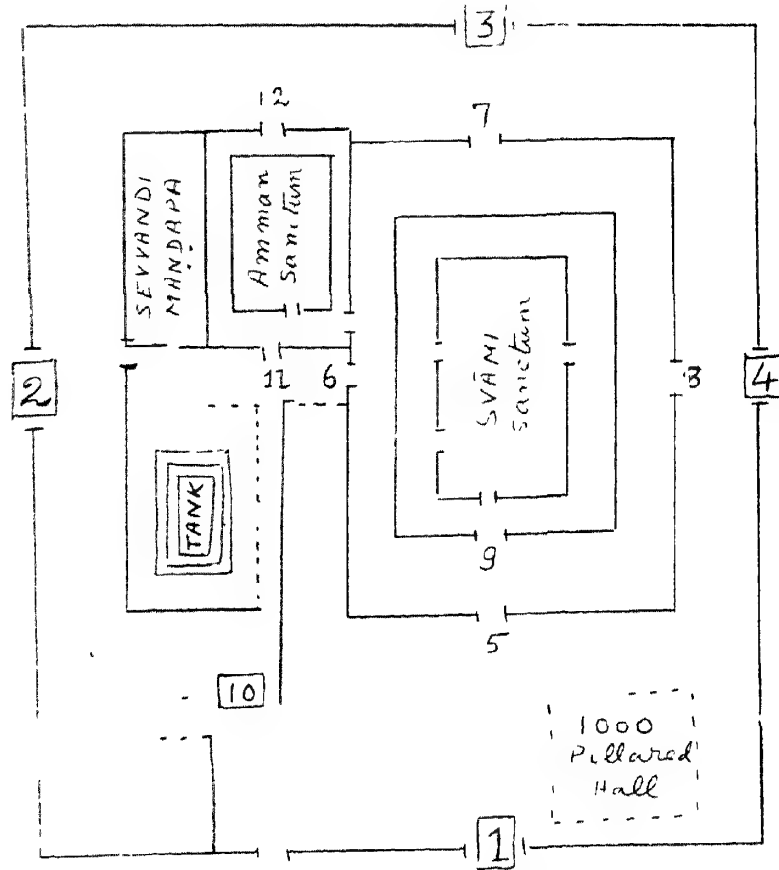


Suchindram Temple



The Entrance to the  
Nagaraja Temple

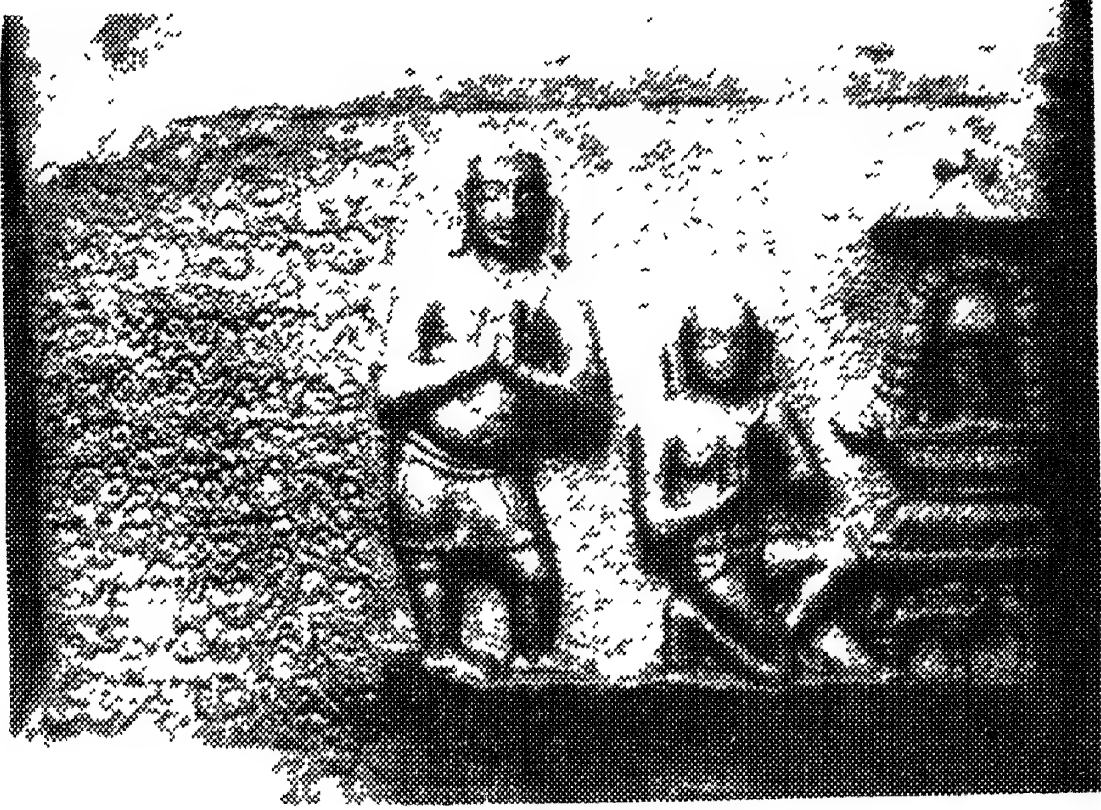
PLAN SHOWING THE LOCATION OF THE GÖPURA  
OF MADURAI MINAKSHI SUNDARESWARA TEMPLE  
(7 ft 6 scale)



- |                        |                         |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 East outer Göpura    | 8 Cinna mollai Göpura   |
| 2 South outer Göpura   | 9 Svami Sannidh. Göpura |
| 3 West outer Göpura    | 10 Chitra Göpura        |
| 4 North outer Göpura   | 11 Vombatturär Göpura   |
| 5 Göpura Nāyaka Göpura | 12 Kādaka Göpura        |
| 6 Nadukkattu Göpura    | 13 Rāya Göpura          |
| 7 Palāka Göpura        |                         |

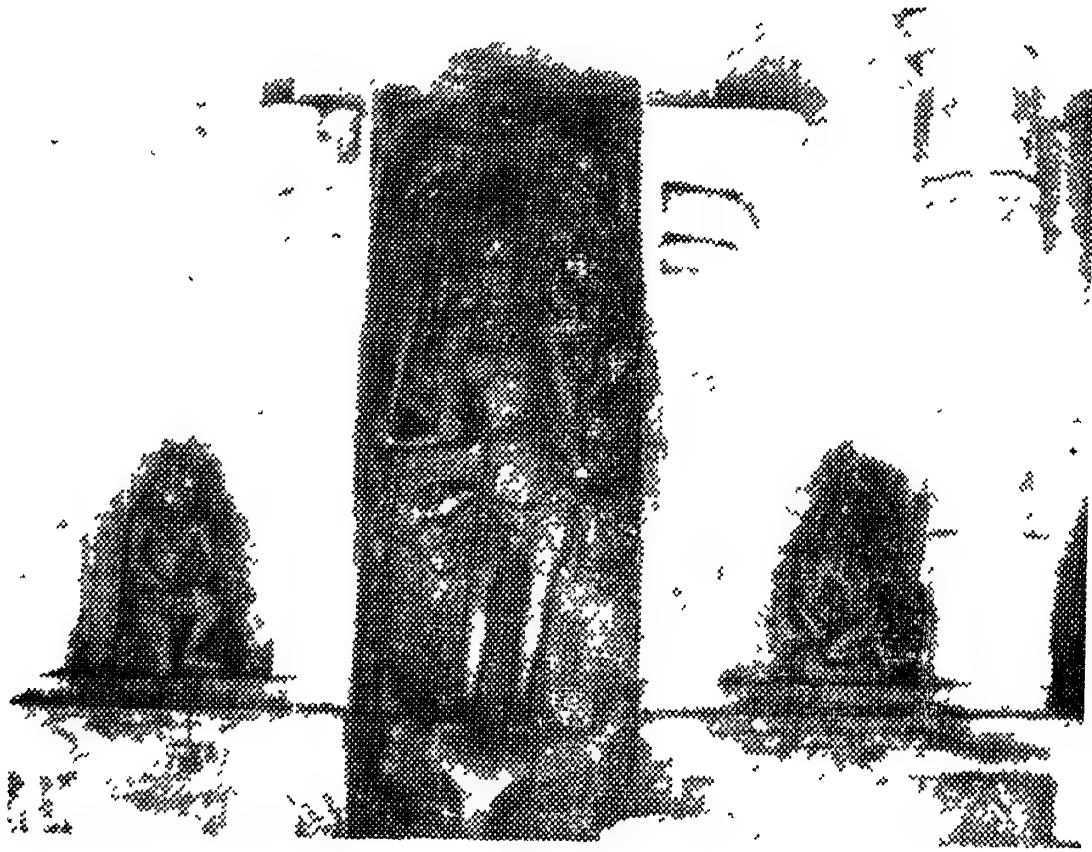
RV





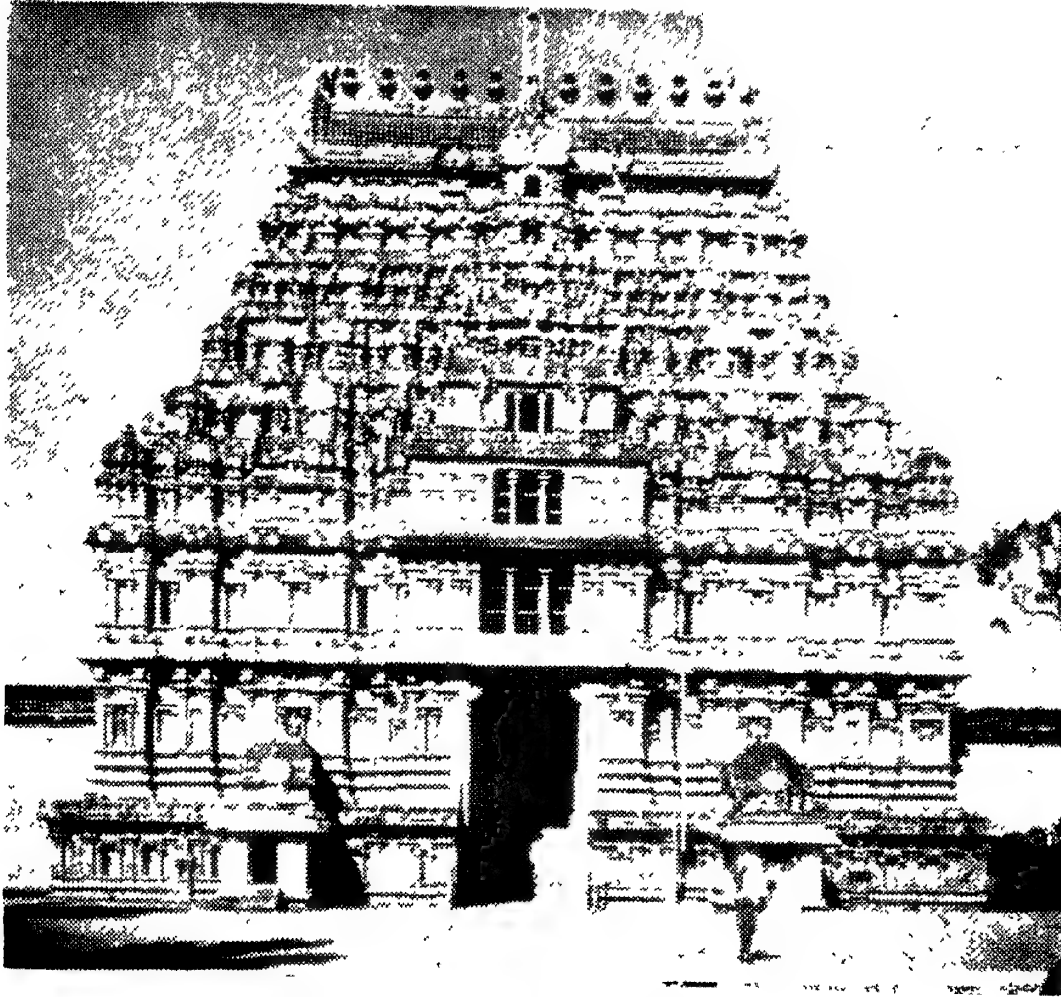
Tiṭṭa Viḷumiyan  
and  
Caṇdecuvarar  
Kullottuṅka Period



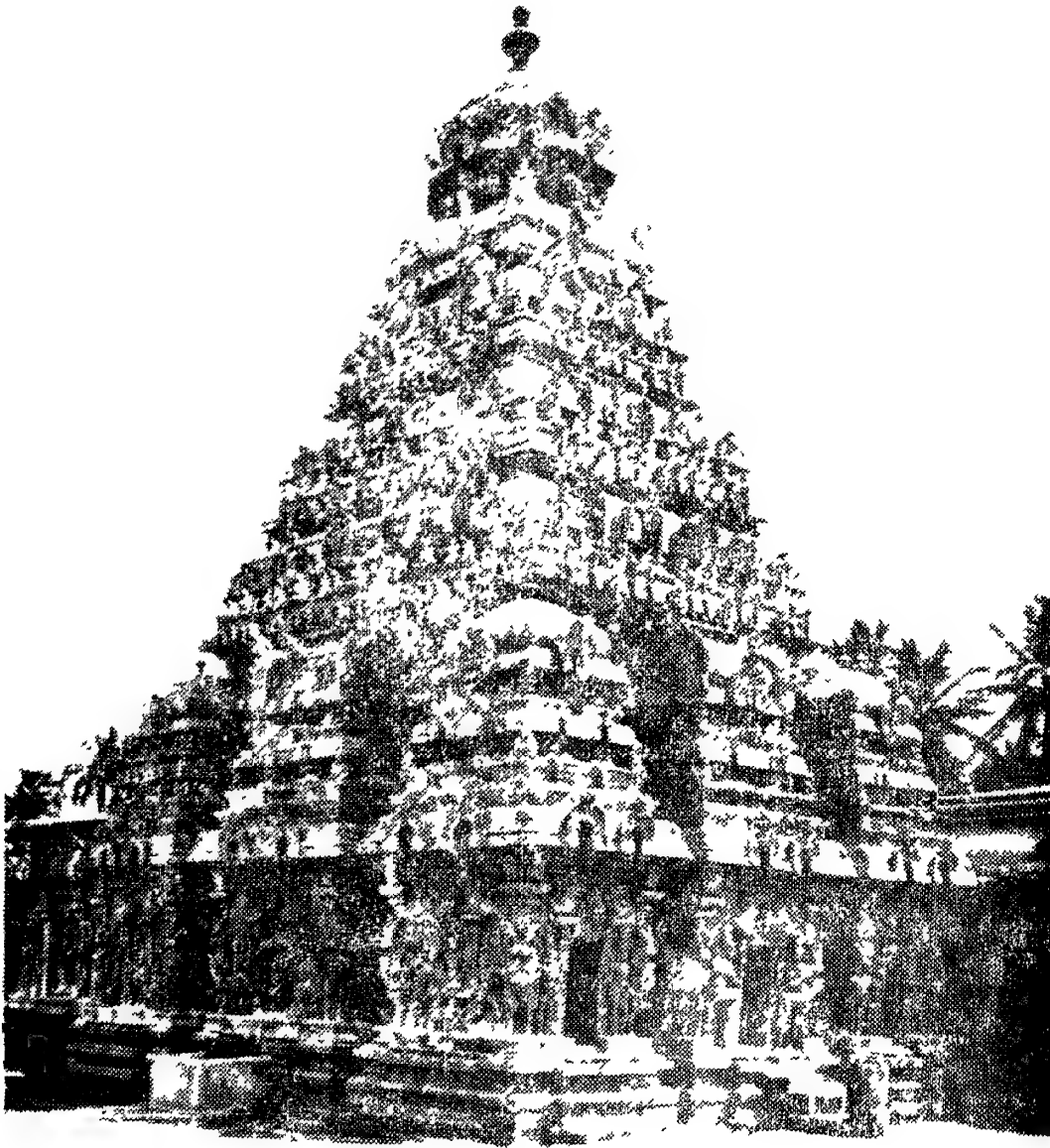


Durga  
on the north wall of  
Artha Maṇṭapā

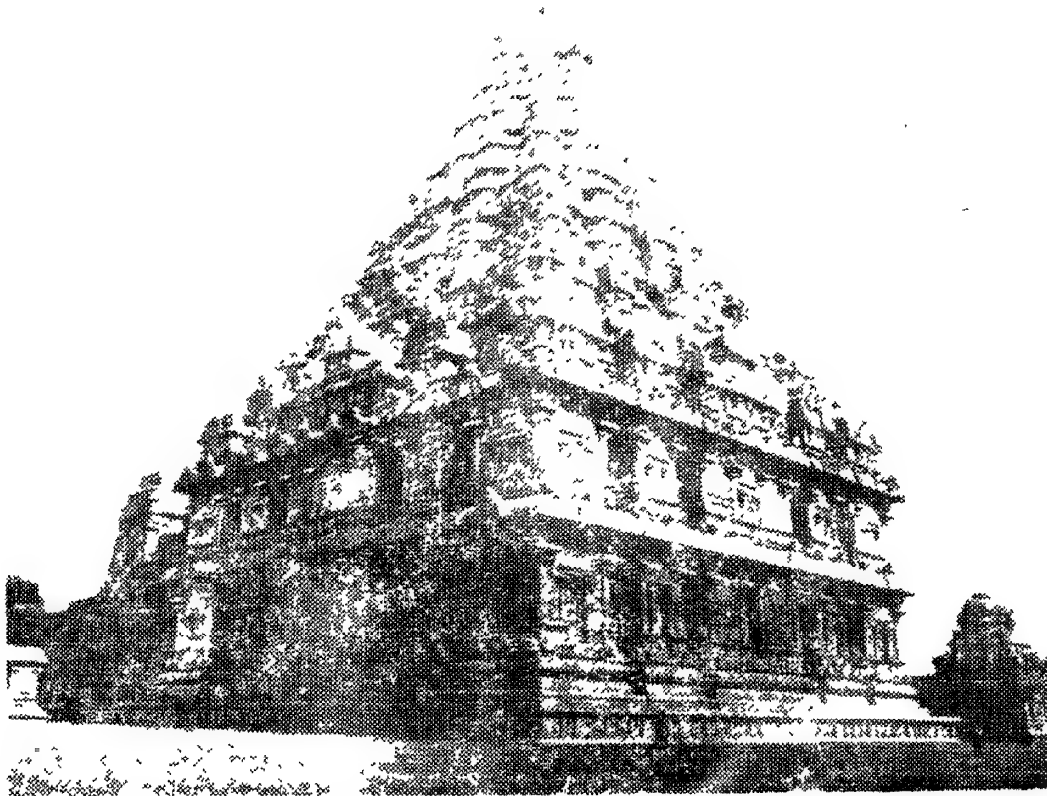
Tiruvārūr Tyagarajaswāmi Temple  
Outer Gōpura East  
Late Cōlanādu Style



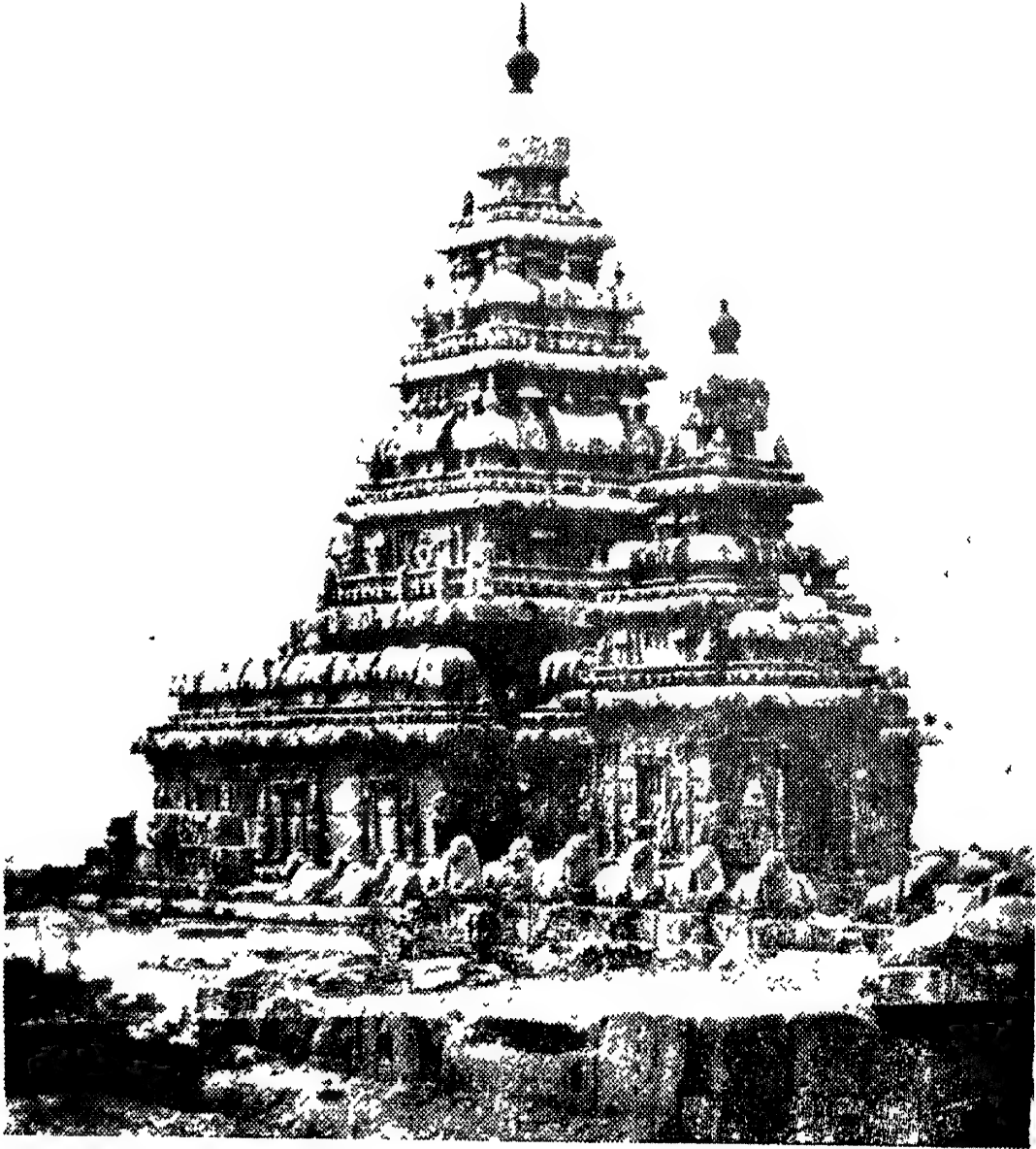
Cōlas of Tañjāvūr Phase III  
Period of Kullōttuṅga III  
Late 12th or early 13th A D.



Tiruvadigar Tirivirattānēśwara Temple  
Northwest Tondainādu Style  
Pallavā, Phase II Exterior  
Period of Nṛp-tuṅgavarmā (C.A.D. 854-880)  
with Later Cōla Additions



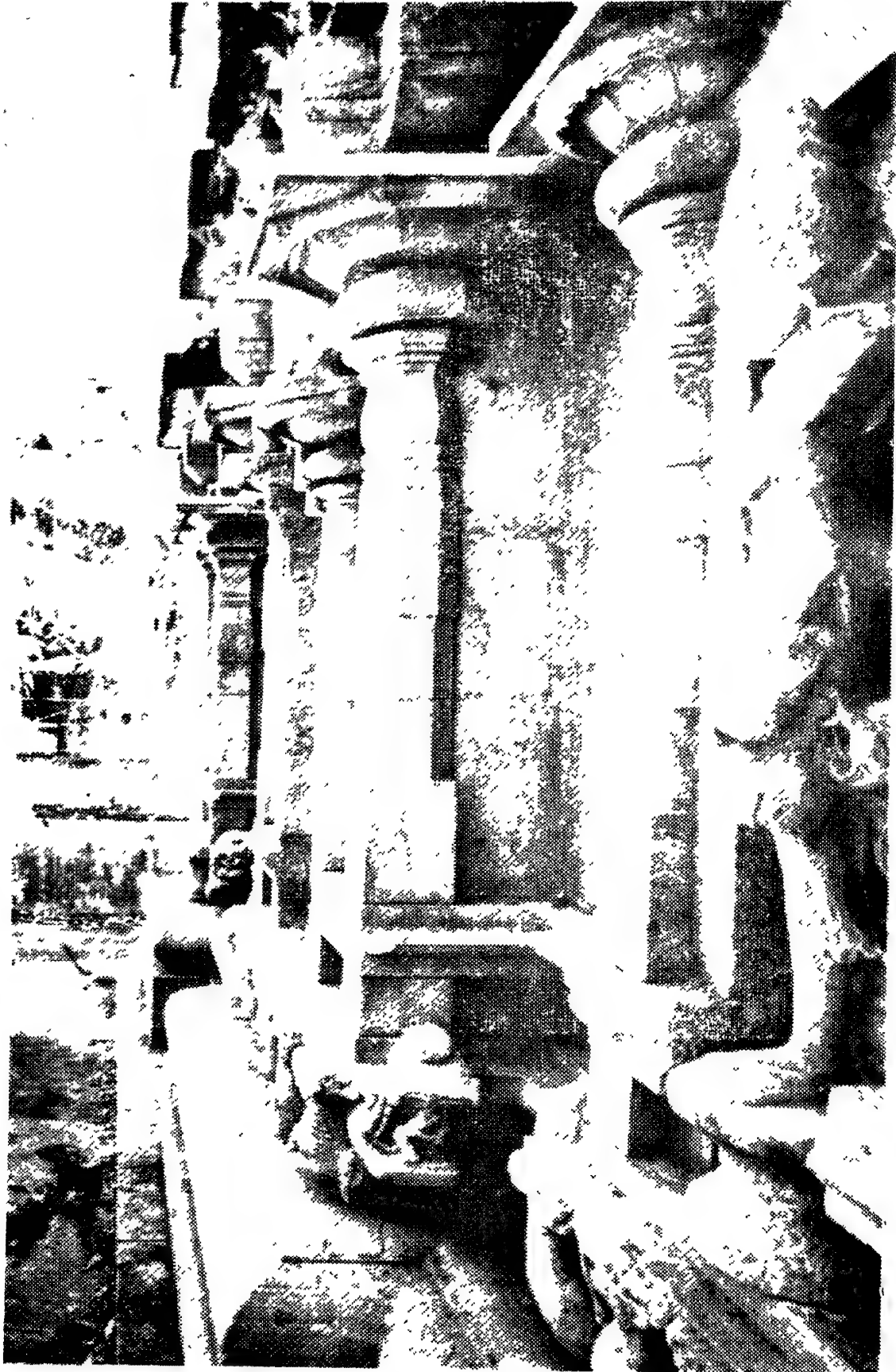
Gangai Konda Cholapuram Temple  
11th Century A.D.  
Rajendra Chola Period



Mahābalipuram Shore Temple  
Northwest, Thoṇḍainaḍu Style  
Pallava, phase I.  
Rājasimha's Period 8th Century A.D.

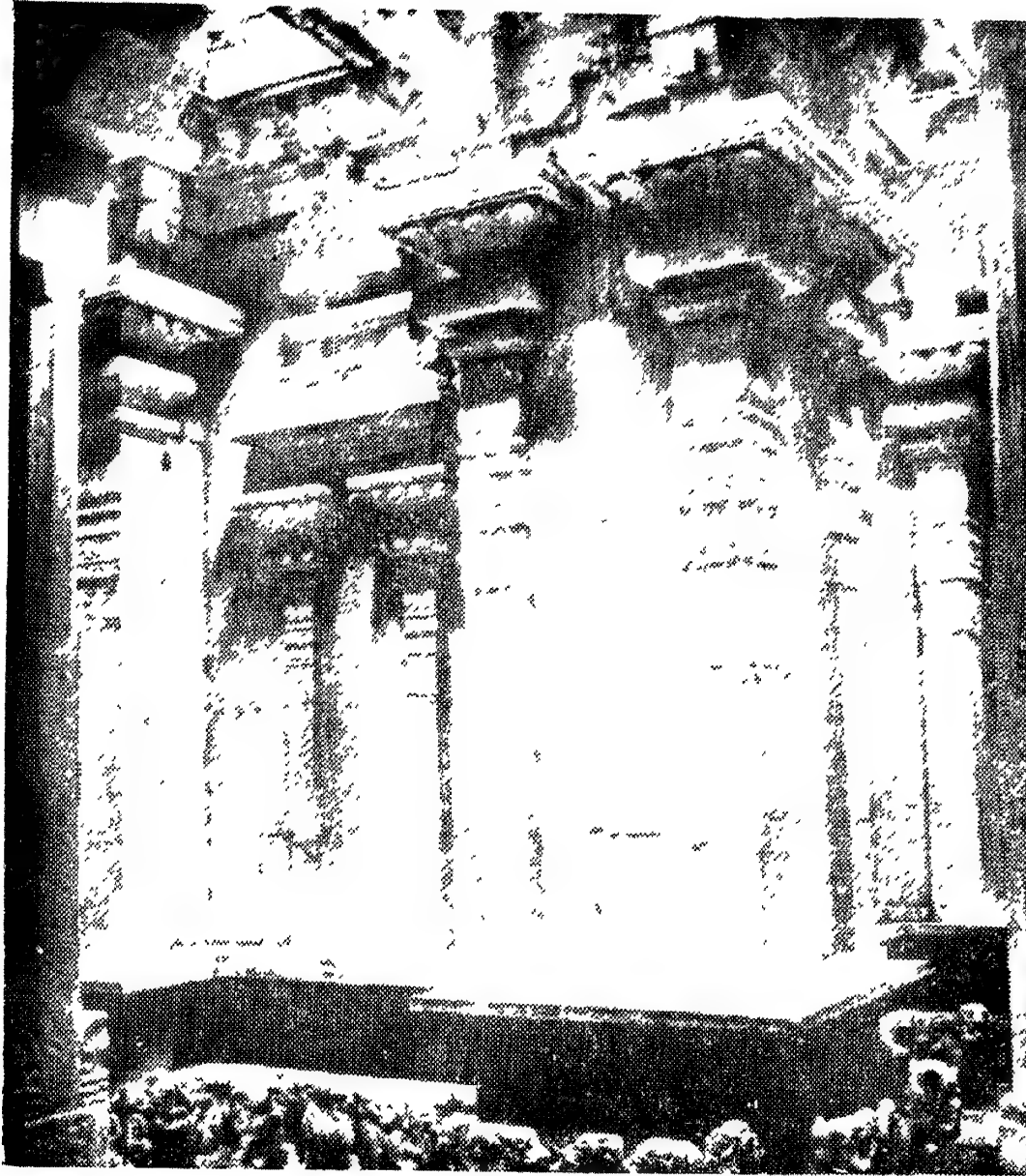


Tribhuvanam Kampaharēśvara Temple  
Northwest Late - Cōlanādu Style  
Cōlas of Tanjāvūr, Phase III  
Period of Kullōttuṅga III (A D. 1178-1218)  
(Courtesy: Archaeological Survey of India)



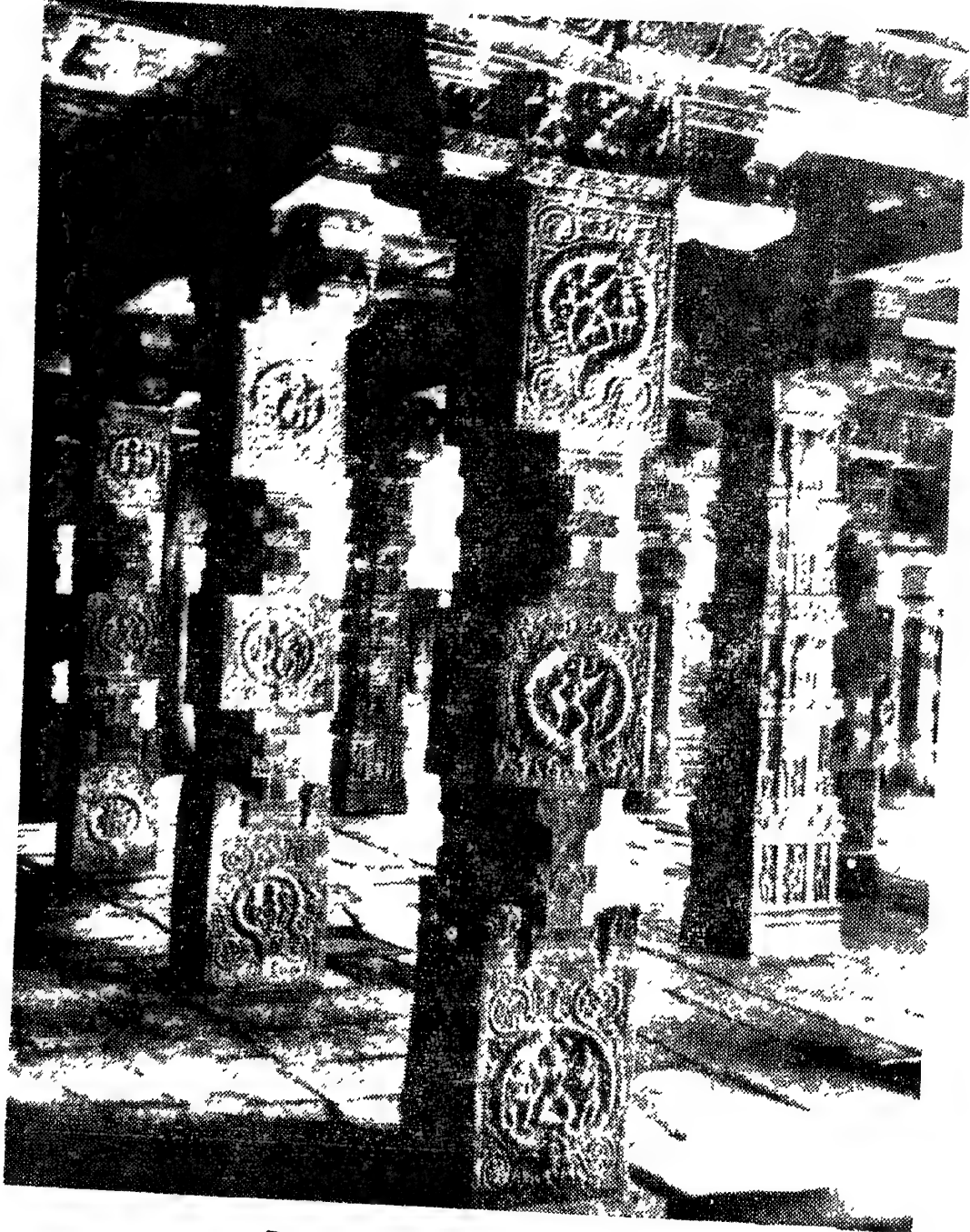
Srīnivāsanallūr Korangañātha  
Vimāna, Southwest wall





Ambāsamudram (Brahmadēsam) Kailāsanātha Temple  
Vimana  
Northwest Pāndinādu Style  
Cōla Occupation Period





Dārāsuraṃ Airāvateśvara  
Mukhamandapa  
Citrakhaṇḍe Columns



Shiva as Kalyanasundara, bronze  
Vadakkalattur  
Thanjavur District  
Pallava Period 9th Century A.D.



Ardhanarisvara  
Chola 11th Century A.D.

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